



JOHANN WOLFGANG von GOETHE

TRUTH AND FANTASY  
from my life

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*Introduction by*

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## Introduction

When Goethe was about sixty, around the end of the first decade of the 19th century, he began to consider the possibility of telling the story of his own life for the entertainment and instruction of his contemporaries and of posterity. In 1811 he set to work and in the course of the next three years he completed the first three parts of *Truth and Fantasy*, in which he recounted his life down to his twenty-fifth year (1774). Then, as happened so often with Goethe, the work was dropped. In the years that followed he continued his autobiographical work at intervals by describing various isolated periods from his later life, of which the most important is the account of his Italian journey (1786-8). But none of these forms part of *Truth and Fantasy*. Then in 1830, at the age of eighty, he added a fourth part to *Truth and Fantasy*, beginning where he had left off in 1814 and bringing the story down to his move to Weimar late in 1775. This moment marked the end of his youth: in Weimar he settled down, both as man and poet, and so we have in *Truth and Fantasy* an account only of Goethe's childhood and youth, which includes the first five years of his poetic production, the years of *Götz*, of *Werther*, of the beginnings of *Faust* and *Egmont*, and of many of the greatest lyric poems in the German language.

At first sight the title of the work is a little disconcerting. Autobiographies are notoriously unreliable even when the author is honestly determined to exclude fantasy and stick to facts. Is it worth reading an autobiography which is admittedly only partly true? Goethe regarded the writing of his autobiography as an artistic task just as much as the writing of a novel. The "truth," that is the mere facts, had to be selected, arranged, emphasised or

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passed over, in short worked on and re-created by the poetic imagination until a picture of himself had been created which was in a symbolical sense "true"—more true than if he had stuck slavishly to fact. As well as drawing himself, Goethe drew in the background of contemporary events and tendencies, often with much care. In our abridged translation a great deal (though by no means all) of this background has been left out: at this distance its interest is faded, whereas the description of Goethe himself is as vivid now as when he wrote it.

*Truth and Fantasy* is the product of Goethe's old age. It is the backward glance of an old man, assured and contented in the consciousness of a successful life of great accomplishment, to the eager days of his childhood and the mortal storms of youth. But from that serene altitude the storms are seen not to have been mortal after all; they are described with the detachment and the gentle humour of the man who has survived them all and sees the proportion of everything. For this reason it is a disappointing book, if we seek in it the secret of Goethe's greatness, a portrayal or analysis of emotional tensions powerful enough to have tossed the mighty ark of his existence into the firmament. How could this young man whom Goethe describes, with his sheltered, well-to-do bourgeois upbringing, his inborn knack of getting the best out of life, produce *Werther* and *Faust*? There is something unexplained here, reticences of the old Goethe about his youth. Goethe in 1811, at the age of 62, was already regarding himself historically. He knew that he would become a symbolical figure for later generations and he wished to have the moulding of his own myth. He wanted the mythical figure of himself to support, not to contradict, the great body of his moral teaching for men, that optimistic *Weltanschauung* that regards all the conflicts of life as reconcilable, given a cheerful positive approach, a wise self-restraint and a willing acceptance of the limitations of what is humanly possible. The young man we meet in *Truth and Fantasy* could very well be the youthful version of the successful positivist which Goethe later appeared to become, of the happy pagan who was determined to make the best of this life and not bother about

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the next. For him there seems to be nothing in life that a healthy common sense and abundant vitality cannot overcome. Yet it was precisely in those years from late 1770 to late 1775, that Goethe learnt from terrifying personal experience the power and the reality of the dark forces that tempt or drive men to overstep the wise bounds, to delight in the ruthless clash of opposites, to seek salvation from the misery of existence in the supreme moment of intensest living whose reward is death. He knew that his own greatness was due in part to his intimacy with the inhuman powers; but he did not wish his self-portrait to reveal this too clearly, and so we get a delightful and vividly drawn picture of a gifted and fortunate young man, not essentially unlike many hundreds of his contemporaries. Of the terrors and agonies which brought him at times to the edge of suicide and madness and which resulted in much of his greatest poetry, we have only occasional hints.

Goethe was young at a turning point in the spiritual history of modern Europe. The long reign of Reason was coming to a sudden and violent end, swept away in an onrush of emotionalism which had been released by Rousseau and Richardson. The reaction was more violent in Germany than in France and England. Just as rationalism had taken more absurd and exaggerated forms, so now in literature the revolt against rules and reason was more complete and produced more monstrosities in Germany than elsewhere. Herder was the apostle of the new faith, one of the greatest literary critics of all times, who insisted on powerful emotion as the basis of great poetry, and pointed to folk-song and ballad, to Homer and to Shakespeare as the great examples of emotion expressed spontaneously and directly in natural form.

Goethe's chance meeting with Herder in Strasbourg in the autumn of 1770 was a decisive moment in his life. He had lately come from the university at Leipzig, that German city in which the French rationalist forms of social life and of art were most fanatically observed. The poems which Goethe had written up to this moment were just such pretty, polished Frenchified stuff as was fashionable in Leipzig. But volcanic fires were seething beneath the surface. He left Leipzig sick in body and mind and in the

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eighteen months which he then spent at home in Frankfurt his frustrated spirit sought escape in Pietism and even in alchemy and magic. And then in Strasbourg Herder told him quite simply that his emotions and feelings, which till then he had been taught to suppress in the interests of "good form," either social or literary, were the truly divine part of him and must be given free scope to create their own form. And suddenly the whole vast power of his spirit was released and he began to write and live. *Götz* and the *Sesenheim* lyrics created at a stroke the new literature of emotion, and were followed in these amazing five years by *Werther*, *Egmont*, many more lyrics, the great Titanic odes and, greatest and most wonderful of all, the fragmentary beginnings of *Faust*—the opening soliloquy and the scene with the Earth-spirit and all the Gretchen tragedy

In these five years of Goethe's "Storm and Stress," emotion was his god "Feeling is everything": So *Faust* sums up his confession of faith. For that reason *Werther* has to die. It would have been a sin against the holy spirit of life to suppress his hopeless passion, to go away and try to forget his Lotte. If passion drives him to his death, he must even die, for passion is God.

In *Werther* Goethe retold his own experience. He too had loved a girl, Charlotte by name, who was already promised to another, and he had come near enough to suicide at least to understand the nature of the forces which in their final stages sweep their victim along to destruction. Fortunately however his instinctive love of life was stronger than his devotion to the god of passion. He did go away, and succeeded in forgetting. But the experience had been terrifying and he realised he was not safe from a recurrence. These emotions, these unconscious urges, had become so uncontrollable that they seemed to him to be something quite outside himself, the will of some more powerful being, some "Daemon," which possessed him at times and used him as its instrument. The experience was intoxicating, it could give draughts of life unknown in everyday existence. But at any moment the ruthless power, indifferent to human happiness, might dash its victim from the pinnacle of life to destruction. In *Egmont* Goethe tried to express what he had

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experienced of delight and of terror in his contact with the Daemon.

There is little mention in *Truth and Fantasy* of Goethe's work on *Faust*. We do not know exactly at what time between 1770 and 1775 he was writing the *Urfaust* (as the first fragments which date from this period are called). We know with certainty only that he took the manuscript with him to Weimar. Certainly the mood of the *Urfaust* does not fit in with Goethe's picture of himself in *Truth and Fantasy*. In *Faust* Goethe unloaded all his vast discontent, his surging desire for superhuman joys and sufferings, for that intensest moment of living of which the price might well be death—the eternal death of the spirit not less than the passing death of the body. And in the Gretchen tragedy—the most humanly poignant drama that any German ever wrote—he shows us in all its naked horror the ineluctable brutality of existence, to which a human life, unique miracle of beauty and potential goodness, is a thing only to be crushed, discarded and forgotten.

Certainly there were tensions in Goethe in those last years before he went to Weimar, dynamic thrusts and surges which would have destroyed most men. The power of his emotions and his subservience to them seem not to have lessened as the months and years passed but rather to have grown greater. The normal control of reason that teaches us caution and self-discipline, seemed in his case to be almost totally lacking. He had saved himself from Werther's fate by the skin of his teeth, in the next such crisis he might be less lucky. German geniuses have a way of killing themselves or going mad, it was touch and go with Goethe whether he would start the fashion that Holderlin, Kleist, Schumann and Nietzsche followed.

Something of the feverish uncertainty of Goethe's last year in Frankfurt is revealed in the last book of *Truth and Fantasy*, especially in the vivid description of the invitation to Weimar and the agonising weeks of doubt and waiting which followed. It is typical of the planlessness of Goethe's life at this time that this decisive step which was to save him from himself and determine the whole course of his future life, was undertaken as a whim, a momentary distraction from the turmoil of his affairs at home.



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He went on a visit and stayed for a lifetime.

In Weimar he was saved. The unbridled emotionalism of the last five years subsided—why, who can say? He was getting older. In the hidden rhythm of his spiritual-corporal entity it was time for the opposite pole, his innate sense of form, of concentration, of solidity, to assert itself. Two external circumstances enormously helped this inevitable tendency. The young duke of Weimar, eight years his junior, great-hearted and passionate, quickly came under the spell of Goethe's personality. Goethe became his unofficial tutor and mentor, and was entrusted by him with much of the affairs of the miniature state. At a blow, therefore, Goethe was taught responsibility—responsibility for the precious life entrusted to his guidance and for public affairs. How could he preach self-discipline to his wild young charge if he did not practise it himself?

And at the same time, as often before, a love-affair was having a decisive influence on his development. But what a strange love-affair! His new Charlotte—Charlotte von Stein—was married, seven years older than he and seven times a mother. She was a woman of great moral force and deep piety. He could never hope to possess her. His love must be content to exist under the guise of friendship. And just as Goethe took in hand the moral education of the duke, so Charlotte took Goethe in hand. She taught him to be a good boy, gave him to understand she did not like wild ways, outbursts of emotion, unbridled desires; taught him to be content with what was possible, to find satisfaction in the fulfilment of his duty and the approval of the wiser and gentler members of the society in which he lived, especially of the women. The mental and spiritual struggles which all this cost him are recreated, in strangely smooth and elegant verse, though with great psychological power, in his *Tasso*. She made him too as nearly a Christian as he ever became. She taught him that God is good and loving and that if we trust to his love he will not fail us. With wonderful power and eloquence Goethe tried in *Iphigenie* to persuade himself and the world that this is so. But he knew in his heart that the truth was otherwise: life is cruel and indifferent to our happiness and our higher aspirations. We try to make it, and it is our duty to make

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it, more tolerable for ourselves and each other by observing our moral codes and acting as though these had divine authority. Re-reading *Iphigenie* some twenty years after he had written it Goethe dubbed it: "Really too damned humane."

He could not be bound for ever by the silken bonds that Charlotte laid on him. He absorbed and made part of himself what suited him in her teaching—the necessity of self-discipline, even, at times, of renunciation, and the all-importance of a purpose—and threw over the rest. He had developed in Weimar a hard crust over his emotions. It consisted partly of genuine self-control, partly of a complicated system of escapes, evasions, blindnesses and deafnesses, the purpose of which was to protect him from anything which might set in motion some chain of uncontrollable feeling. So he acquired for himself the reputation of Olympian aloofness and imperturbability; and much of his later poetry suffers from a too conscious desire to restrain the expression of emotion for the sake of outward form and polish. But the fires were still there; they could blaze up and consume him as in the days of *Werther*. Even at the age of seventy-four he was shaken and rent by love for a nineteen-year-old girl. Ridiculous dotard's passion! Yet from it we have a poem—the *Marienbad Elegy*—in which the old man's human grandeur in suffering silences all mockery. And right to the end, up to a few weeks before his death at the age of eighty-three, he was bringing forth and laying away in *Faust* some of the greatest poetry in the German language. Truly his was a human life of rare perfection and achievement! The promise of those early years in Frankfurt was fulfilled abundantly.

It seems that two qualities are necessary if a great artist is to continue creative to the end of a long life: he must on the one hand retain an abnormally keen awareness of the dangers and evils of life, he must never grow complacent, never be content with life, must always demand the impossible and when he cannot have it, must despair. The burden of the mystery must be with him day and night. He must be shaken by the naked truths that will not be comforted. This divine discontent, this disequilibrium, this state of inner tension is the source of artistic energy. Many lesser poets

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have it only in youth; some even of the greatest lose it in middle life. Wordsworth lost the courage to despair and with it his poetic power. But more often the dynamic tensions are so powerful that they destroy the man before he reaches maturity. The artist must, therefore, also have an exceptional tenacity, an instinctive determination to live which can balance his reckless heart. How many lack this toughness and succumb! In Germany alone Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Holderlin, Kleist, Novalis, Nietzsche could not stay the course. Goethe alone of the great poets and musicians of his day lived out the full span of human life and kept his poetic vitality to the end. For he was tough. He clung to life and would not be shaken off. His danger lay rather with Wordsworth in complacency. He tried so hard to reconcile all the conflicts and to persuade himself that life was always good and beautiful. But there remained a side of his soul raw and exposed to the bleak winds of truth, and here from time to time, unasked and unwanted, inspiration entered and shook from the ageing tree more fruits as sweet as those of its youth. So at the height of his obsession with the cool restrained grandeur of Greek classical form, when he was struggling with a tedious hexameter epic in imitation of Homer, Faust, that northern barbarian who stormed through life unsatisfied and unsatisfiable, suddenly rose up from his unconscious and dictated to the disgruntled poet hundreds of lines of the best poetry he ever wrote.

*Truth and Fantasy* veils the terrifying struggles in which Goethe's poetic sensibility involved him, but it gives a vivid and memorable picture of the superabundant vitality without which he could not have borne the burden of his calling to the end of a long life. Above all we feel in almost every line his colossal capacity for enjoying life and getting the most out of it—a quality which most German poets have sadly lacked. And this he kept to the end of his days (as the *Talks with Eckermann* show); this, and his quivering sensibility, and from these two his greatness is compounded.

HUMPHRY TREVELYAN.

TRUTH AND FANTASY FROM MY LIFE



## EARLY YEARS

**I** WAS born in Frankfurt-am-Main on the 28th August, 1749, on the stroke of twelve noon. The constellations were favourable. The Sun was in the house of Virgo, ascending to the zenith for the day; Jupiter and Venus were propitious, Mercury was not adverse, Saturn and Mars remained indifferent. Only the Moon, who had just waxed to the full, exercised the full influence of her polarity, as she had just attained her planetary hour. Hence she was in opposition to my birth, which could not take place until this hour had passed.

These good influences, which the astrologers were later to rate very highly in my favour, may well account for my survival: for through the midwife's awkwardness I was apparently stillborn, and it was only after a great deal of trouble that I was brought to life. But although this caused my family great alarm, it turned out to be a good thing in the end for my fellow-citizens. For as a result, my grandfather, the burgomaster Johann Wolfgang Textor, had an obstetrician appointed, and midwifery training was introduced or brought up to date, which may have been to the advantage of many of those born afterwards.

When we try to recall events in our earliest childhood, it often happens that we confuse what we have heard from others with things we have really seen and experienced. However, without going into this subject further, which would in any case lead nowhere, I do know that we lived in an old house, which was actually two houses knocked together. It had a winding staircase leading to unconnected rooms, and

steps wherever the floors were not exactly on the same level. For us children, a younger sister and myself, the favourite room was the spacious hall on the ground floor, which had by the door a lattice-fronted verandah looking straight into the street and the open air. This kind of bird-cage, which many houses had, was called a lattice-room. It was here that the women sat with their sewing and knitting, and the cook cleaned the vegetables, from these places the housewives exchanged gossip; and in the warm season all this gave the streets a southern character. One had a sense of being free and in touch with what was going on outside. It was through this lattice, too, that we children came into contact with the neighbours. It was in this way that the three von Ochsenstein brothers, who lived opposite, sons of the deceased burgo-master, grew fond of me; they used to play with me and tease me in all sorts of ways.

My family liked to tell stories of the fooleries to which these otherwise grave and solitary men egged me on. I shall mention only one of these pranks. The pottery fair had just been held, and not only had the kitchen been supplied with new crockery for some time to come, but little pots and dishes had also been bought for us children, as toys. One fine afternoon, when everything was quiet in the house, I was playing about in the lattice-room with my toy crockery; and as I was not getting much fun out of it, I tried throwing one of the pots into the street and was delighted with the jolly way it smashed. The von Ochsensteins, who saw me merrily clapping my little hands, shouted: 'More! More!' I lost no time in flinging another pot. And as they went on shouting for more, bit by bit I flung all my little dishes, jars and jugs out on to the cobbles. My neighbours went on applauding and I was highly delighted at providing them with such entertainment. But my supplies were exhausted, and they were still shouting: 'More! More!' So I made a bee-line into the kitchen and fetched the earthenware plates, which, it must be confessed, made an even more amusing show as they smashed. And so I ran to and fro, bringing one

plate after the other as I could get them down from the plate-rack; and because my audience refused to be satisfied, I hurled to its doom all the crockery I could collect. When finally somebody came to stop me, it was too late. The disaster was complete. But to make up for so much broken crockery my family at least had an amusing story, and the mischievous instigators had something to laugh about to the end of their days.

My father's mother, whose house it really was, had a big room at the back, opening directly off the hall; and we used to play right under her chair and even, when she was ill, beside her bed. I remember her as being almost like a spirit, a beautiful, gaunt woman, always neatly dressed in white. She remains in my memory as she always was, gentle, kind and benevolent.

The street where we lived was called the Hirschgraben,\* and as we could see neither ditch nor stags, we wanted to know why. It was explained to us that the place where our house stood had once been outside the city, and where the street was now, there had been a ditch in which a number of stags were kept. According to an old custom, once a year the senate publicly dined off venison, and stags to provide meat for this feast were always kept here, close at hand, in case neighbouring princes and barons should infringe on the city's hunting rights or the city be besieged by enemies. We thought this very exciting and wished there were still such preserves to be seen in our own time, with tame stags.

From the back of the house, and particularly from the upper storey, there was a very pleasant view over an almost endless panorama of neighbours' gardens stretching out to the city walls. But, unfortunately, when the common ground here was transformed into private gardens, our house and a few others nearer the corner of the street were at a disadvantage. For the houses on the way up from the Rossmarkt† had added extensive outbuildings and appropriated large gardens, while

\* Stagditch

† Horsemarket



we were shut out from that nearby paradise by the high wall of our yard.

On the second floor we had a room called the conservatory, where an attempt had been made to compensate for the lack of a garden by having some plants in the window. As I grew older, this not uncheerful place, which to me seemed somehow nostalgic, became my favourite haunt. Looking across the gardens, over the city walls and fortifications, one could see a beautiful, fertile plain, stretching away towards Hochst. It was here that I generally learnt my lessons in summertime, watched thunderstorms coming up, and could not have enough of gazing at the sunset, towards which these windows faced. But as at the same time I could see the neighbours strolling in their gardens and tending their flowers, children playing and parties of people enjoying themselves, and could hear the bowls rolling and the ninepins falling, the contrast early aroused a sense of solitude in me. And so, being naturally serious and of a visionary cast of mind, I began to know a yearning that gradually became more marked in the course of time.

Being old, full of nooks and crannies and dark corners, the house was just the sort of place to awaken a sense of uncanny awe in a child's mind. Unfortunately, the educational principle that still prevailed was to rid children of all fear of the unknown and the invisible at an early age, by making them used to everything that might inspire such feelings. For this reason we children were made to sleep alone, and when we could not bear it and stealthily slipped out of bed to seek the company of maids and men-servants, it was not long before our father loomed up before us with his dressing-gown on inside out, which made him look quite different and strange to us, and chased us back to our beds in a fright. The bad effect of this can easily be imagined. How can anybody get rid of fear if he is wedged in between two sources of terror? My mother, who was always cheerful and gay and liked other people to be the same, thought out a better method of training children. She achieved her ends by a system of

rewards. It was the time when peaches were in season and she promised us as many of them as we could eat every morning, if we had got the better of our fear the night before. It worked, and both parties were satisfied.

Inside the house I was fascinated most of all by a series of Roman views that my father had put up in an ante-room; they were engraved by several skilful predecessors of Piranesi, with a fine feeling for architecture and perspective, as well as a very clear and exquisite technique. There I daily saw the Piazza del Popolo, the Colosseum, St. Peter's Square, St. Peter's from inside and out, the Castel Sant' Angelo, and many other places. I became very familiar with the characteristic outlines of these scenes, and our father, in general a very taciturn man, sometimes relaxed to the extent of describing one of these places for us. He had a great love for the Italian language and for everything connected with Italy. Sometimes, too, he would show us a small collection of specimens of marble, stones and other natural objects that he had brought back with him from Italy. He spent a large part of his time writing an account of his travels in Italian, revising and copying it with his own hand, slowly and exactly, in notebook after notebook. A cheerful old Italian language-master, called GIOVINAZZI, helped him with it. This old man also sang not at all badly, and my mother had to make shift to accompany him and herself at the piano every day. And so it happened that I soon knew *Solitario bosco ombroso* by heart, even before I could understand it.

My father was altogether of a schoolmasterly nature, and, being free from business, he was fond of passing on to others what he himself knew and could do. For instance, in the first years of their marriage he had encouraged my mother to write regularly, as well as to keep up her piano and singing, which also involved her in having to acquire some elementary knowledge of the Italian language.

We generally spent our free time in our grandmother's spacious sitting-room, where we had plenty of room for our games. She had all kinds of little ways of keeping us busy

and always had some titbits for us to eat. One Christmas Eve, however, she set the crown on all her good deeds by producing a puppet-show for us, so creating a new world in the old house. This unexpected spectacle exerted a powerful fascination over the children's minds; it made a particularly strong and lasting impression on the boy.

The little stage, with its mute performers, which was at first only shown to us but later handed over to us to practise with ourselves and bring to life with dramas of our own, was all the more treasured by us because it was the last present we received from our kind-hearted grandmother; for soon afterwards increasing ill-health kept her from our sight, until death took her from us for ever. Her departure was the more important for the family since it caused a complete alteration of our circumstances.

So long as Grandmother was alive, my father had been careful not to make the slightest change or improvement in the house; but we all knew that he was contemplating a very considerable reconstruction, which was now begun without delay. In Frankfurt, as in most old towns, it had been the practice to gain space in wooden buildings by making not only the first but also the higher storeys project over the street, which incidentally made narrow streets, in particular, sombre and depressing. Finally a law was passed permitting only the first storey of a new house to project over the ground floor, while the upper storeys had to keep within these limits. In order to avoid losing the projecting space in the second storey, my father, little concerned about architectural beauty and only interested in interior comfort, circumvented this law, as others had done before him, by shoring up the upper parts of the house, taking away one storey after another from the bottom upwards and as it were slipping in the new structure, so that although finally none of the old house was left, the whole new building could be considered a mere restoration. Now, as the demolition and rebuilding were being done gradually, my father had made up his mind not to budge from the house, in order to be in a better position to supervise and

direct the work; for he was quite well up in the technicalities of building. At the same time, however, he did not want to part from his family. This new epoch was very surprising and strange for the children. The rooms in which they had often been kept under some constraint and bothered with tedious lessons and tasks, the passages where they had played, the walls which had been so meticulously kept clean—how astonishing to see all this falling under the mason's pick and the carpenter's axe, and from the bottom up, too! And seeing all this happen, while floating as it were in mid-air on nothing but buttressed beams, and nevertheless being kept now to a certain lesson, now to a certain task, caused a confusion in the young minds, and it was some time before their balance was restored. But we children felt the inconvenience of it all the less because it also meant that there was more scope for play and many an opportunity for see-sawing on beams and planks.

At first my father stubbornly stuck to his plan; but when finally even the roof was partially removed, and, in spite of the oilcloth wall-hangings being taken down and spread over everything like tarpaulins, the rain came through right into our beds, he grudgingly decided to let the children go and stay with helpful friends, who had made their offer a long time earlier, and to send us out to a public school.

This transition period was in many ways unpleasant. For children who had been kept isolated at home, and brought up in a clean-living and high-minded, although strict, way, were now flung into the midst of a mob of uncouth young urchins. And so, quite unexpectedly, the children had to suffer from contact with all that was vulgar, bad and even vile, being completely unequipped and unable to deal with it.

## THE FAIRS

*[The boy soon went home again, but during the interval he had been able to make an exploration of the city, and on his return to dull domesticity he learnt from his family a great deal about the history and traditions of Frankfurt]*

SCARCELY had we spent six months in seclusion when the fairs came round again. These fairs always produced an incredible ferment in all the children's minds. There was the building-up of so many booths, like a new town springing up inside the town in next to no time, all the hustling and bustling, and the unloading and unpacking of goods, all of which from the very earliest age aroused an insatiably active curiosity and a boundless longing for all the things that children crave. With the passing years the boy tried various ways of satisfying this longing, according to the capacity of his little purse. At the same time he began to form a picture of all the many things that the world produces and is in need of, and what the inhabitants of different parts of the world offer in exchange.

These great occasions, occurring in spring and autumn, were heralded by curious ceremonies, which seemed all the more dignified in that they gave a vivid picture of ancient times and of all that had come down to us from those times. On Escort Day the whole town was up and about, crowds pushing towards the Fahrgasse\* and over the bridge, out to Sachsenhausen and beyond. There were people at every window, although nothing in particular was to be seen all day long; the crowds seemed to be there simply in order to jostle, onlookers merely engaged in looking at each other. For the really interesting thing did not happen until nightfall and was rather believed in than actually seen.

\* Ferry Street.

The fact is that in those uneasy olden days when everyone did wrong as he pleased or maintained the law at his own will, merchants travelling to the fairs were much plagued by highwaymen of both noble and low birth, so that princes and other potentates sent their people to Frankfurt under armed escort. But the citizens of the Free City regarded this as an infringement of their privilege and went out to meet the arrivals. There were often disagreements then as to how far the escorts could come or whether they might even be permitted to enter the city; and this happened not only in connection with commerce and the business of the fairs, but also when persons of high rank approached in times of war or peace, and in particular at the time of imperial elections.

Because of frequent clashes on such occasions, when a lord and his cavalcade who were unwelcome in the town had tried to force their way in, the question had, since very early times, been subject to negotiation, and had on various occasions been settled by treaty, though always with reservations on both sides. Hope was not abandoned of some day settling this quarrel, ancient though it was, particularly as the reason for its having gone on so long and often been so violent had now almost entirely disappeared.

Meanwhile, several detachments of the municipal cavalry, with their captains at their head, still used to ride out of the various gates on such days, to certain points where they met horsemen or hussars belonging to those estates of the realm that were entitled to an escort. They and their officers were welcomed and entertained. This was spun out until evening and then, hardly seen by the waiting crowds, they rode into the city, many a municipal cavalryman being no longer in a condition to manage his horse or keep himself in the saddle. The most important processions came in at the bridge-gate, and so it was there that the largest crowd gathered. Last of all, at nightfall, the mail-coach from Nuremberg arrived, escorted in the same way. There was a traditional saying that there must always be an old woman in the coach, and so at the sight of it the guttersnipes broke

out into shrieks and yells, although it was scarcely possible to make out what kind of people were sitting inside. There was then an incredible rush as the crowd poured through the gate in pursuit of the coach; it was an utterly bewildering experience. The nearby houses were much in demand, for the same reason, by people wanting a good view.

Another, even more peculiar ceremony, which took place in broad daylight and caused much excitement, was the Pipers' Court. It was a survival from those early times when large cities that were also centres of commerce tried to get exemption from, or at least a reduction in, customs duties that were always increasing in proportion as trade increased. The Emperor, who needed the cities' support, used to grant such a concession where it depended on him, but generally only for a year, whereupon it had to be renewed. This was done symbolically by gifts brought to the imperial burgomaster, who was sometimes also the chief inspector of taxes, before the opening of St. Bartholomew's fair; for ceremonial reasons this took place while he sat in full court with the magistrates. Even later on, when the burgomaster was no longer appointed by the Emperor, but elected by the city itself, he still kept these privileges; and the cities' freedom from customs duties, as well as the ceremonies at which the delegates from Worms, Nuremberg and old Bamberg acknowledged the ancient privilege, had continued down to our own time. On the eve of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary it was proclaimed that an open Court would be held. In the great imperial hall, the magistrates sat on raised seats, in a railed-off space, with the burgomaster in their midst, raised one step higher still; the attorneys representing the various parties sat below, on the right. The clerk of the court began to read aloud a list of the important decisions reserved for that day. The attorneys would ask for copies of the documents, or lodge appeals, or do whatever else the situation called for.

All at once quaint music was heard, as though heralding the entrance of past centuries. It came from three pipers, one with an old-fashioned shawm, one with a bassoon, the third

with a bombardon or oboe. They wore gold-braided blue cloaks with the sheet-music fixed to their sleeves, and had their heads covered. So they had set out from their inn on the stroke of ten, the envoys and their suites following, and all stared at by both local people and strangers; and so they entered the hall. The court proceedings came to a halt, pipers and procession stopped before the barrier, the first envoy entered and took his stand opposite the burgomaster. The symbolic gifts, which were punctiliously exacted according to tradition, generally were characteristic products of the city offering them. Pepper was a kind of substitute for all other goods, and so each envoy brought a beautifully turned goblet filled with pepper. On this lay a pair of gauntlets, exquisitely slashed, with silk stitching and tassels, as a sign of privilege accorded and accepted, a symbol which the Emperor himself occasionally used. Beside it was a small white wand, such as was previously essential to almost any judicial proceedings. There were also some small silver coins. The city of Worms brought an old felt hat, which it redeemed time and again, so that the same hat was a witness of these ceremonies through many years.

After the envoy had delivered his speech, handed over his gift, and received from the burgomaster an assurance of continued privilege for the future, he withdrew from the enclosure, the pipers began to play, the procession departed as it had come, and the court went on with its business until the second and finally the third envoy was piped in. There were intervals between their appearances, partly in order to prolong the public entertainment, and partly because the musicians were always the same—old-style virtuosi provided by the city of Nuremberg, which had undertaken to support them for its own use and that of its fellow-cities and produce them at the ceremony every year.

We children took a particular interest in this pageant, because we were somewhat gratified to see our grandfather\* in such a distinguished position. Furthermore, we generally

\* The Burgomaster Textor.



went to pay him a quiet visit that same day, and when Grandmother had emptied the pepper into her spice-store, we would appropriate a goblet and little wand, a pair of gloves or an old silver groat. Listening to an explanation of these symbolic ceremonies, which were in themselves a conjuring-up of ancient times, one could not help being drawn away back into past centuries; and inevitably we asked a great many questions about the manners, customs and beliefs of our ancestors, who seemed to come alive for us in such a marvellous manner, not only in the resurrected pipers and deputations, but even in tangible gifts that sometimes actually came into our own possession.

Such ancient and honourable solemnities were followed in summer by many a festival yet more amusing for us children, outside the city, in the open air. On the right bank of the Main, about half-an-hour down-river from the gate, was a sulphur-spring, neatly walled in and surrounded by ancient lime trees. Not far away was the Good People's House, formerly a hospital built here because of the spring. On the common grazing-grounds round about, the local cattle were herded together on a certain day in the year, and the herds and their sweethearts had a rural holiday, with dance and song and all sorts of frolics and rough romping. On the other side of the city was a similar, rather larger common, also with a spring and with even more beautiful lime trees. There the sheep were driven at Whitsuntide, and then, too, the poor wan orphan-children were let out from behind their walls into the open air; for it did not occur to people until later that such forsaken little creatures, who would also have to make their way through the world, should be brought into contact with the world early, and that instead of keeping them in dreary confinement, one must make them ~~acc~~ustomed to service and endurance, it being necessary to strengthen them physically and morally from babyhood. Our nurses and nursemaids, themselves always eager for a walk, never missed a chance of carrying us or taking us walking

to such places, so that these pastoral festivities are among the earliest impressions I can recall.

Meantime the rebuilding of the house was finished. Indeed, it was done in a comparatively short time because everything had been well thought out and organised and the necessary money was always ready. Now we all gathered together again, feeling thoroughly comfortable and at home. For when once a well-thought-out plan has been carried out, one forgets all the inconvenience met with in the process. The house was fairly spacious for a private dwelling: it was very light and cheerful, the staircase broad, and the halls and landings airy; and the view across the gardens could now be comfortably enjoyed from several windows. The interior decoration and furnishing was gradually finished, keeping us all busy and interested.

\* \* \*

And so the other rooms, too, were gradually completed according to their various purposes. Now everything was clean and tidy and big panes of plate-glass in particular contributed to the perfect brightness which the old house had previously lacked for various reasons, but mainly because of its bull's-eye window-panes. My father was in excellent spirits, because everything had gone so well. And had his good humour not sometimes been disturbed by the fact that the workmen did not always work as hard or as well as he expected of them, one could not have wished for a happier life, which was due partly to the family itself and partly to the outer world.

THE LISBON EARTHQUAKE  
AND EDUCATION AT HOME

**B**UT now the boy's peace of mind was deeply shaken for the first time, by an extraordinary event in the great world. On the 1st of November, 1755, came the Lisbon earthquake, spreading tremendous horror through a world lulled in peace and tranquillity. A large and magnificent capital, both a port and a city of commerce, was struck—quite without warning—by the most terrible disaster. The earth shuddered and swayed, the sea came roaring up, hurling the ships against each other, houses collapsed, with churches and towers toppling down upon them, and the royal palace was partly swallowed up by the sea. The earth cracked open and seemed to belch forth flames, with smoke and fire rising everywhere among the ruins. Sixty thousand people, who had been in peace and comfort only an instant earlier, perished in a moment; and those who had no time to realise what was happening were the luckiest of them. The fires continued to rage, and with them raged a mob of desperadoes whom this disaster had brought forth from their hiding-places or from behind prison bars. The unfortunate survivors became a prey to robbery, murder and every sort of outrage. So on every side nature let loose the fury of her wanton will

Even before the news came, signs of this disaster had spread over vast distances. In many places fainter shocks had been felt; and many springs, particularly those with healing waters, had stopped their flow in an unusual way. All the more overwhelming was the impact of the news itself, first the broad outlines of what had happened, and soon afterwards all the terrible details. Now God-fearing people lost no time in producing their moral reflections, the philosophers their consoling explanations, and the clergy their sermons on Divine wrath. All this stir fixed public attention on this one point for some

time, and people who had been disturbed by a far-off disaster became all the more frightened for themselves and their families as more news continued to pour in from all sides, bringing fresh details of the appalling damage this earthquake had caused. Indeed, it is likely that the spectre of fear never before cast its dread shadow over the world so swiftly and overwhelmingly.

The boy, who heard all this over and over again, was considerably shocked. God, the Creator and Preserver of Heaven and Earth, as He was so wisely and graciously shown to be by the explanation of the first article in the Creed, had shown Himself to be anything but fatherly in delivering up the just to the same doom as the unjust. The child tried in vain to cope with his new doubts. But what made it more difficult, even impossible, was the fact that wise and learned men themselves could not agree as to what to think of such a phenomenon.

The following summer another opportunity occurred of making more direct acquaintance with the angry God of whom the Old Testament records so much. A sudden hail-storm burst violently, smashing the new plate-glass window-panes at the back of the house, which faced west, damaging the new furniture and ruining some valuable books and other cherished things. It was the more terrifying for us children because all the servants were quite beside themselves and dragged us off into a dark passage, where they knelt down and did their best to conciliate the wrathful Deity by much fearful wailing and shrieking. Meanwhile, my father, the only person still in his senses, flung the window-frames open and lifted them off their hinges, so saving some of the glass but leaving the rooms open to the rain that followed the hail, so that when we all recovered from our alarm we found ourselves surrounded by floods and streams of water on the landings and stairs.

Such incidents, disturbing though they were in themselves, scarcely interrupted the course of our lessons, which our father had made up his mind to give us himself. He had spent

his own schooldays at the Coburg Gymnasium, which was one of the best German schools. There he had had a good grounding in languages and the other subjects that make up an education in the humanities. Afterwards he studied law at Leipzig and took his degree at Giessen. His very sound thesis, *Electa de aditione hereditatis*, is still quoted with approval by professors of jurisprudence.

All fathers have the pious hope of seeing their sons accomplish what they themselves failed in, rather as though they were having a second life and could now make proper use of the experience gained in the first. Being conscious of his own learning, sure of his perseverance, and mistrustful of the general run of teachers, my father resolved to teach his children himself and only to have lessons given by special masters where it was absolutely necessary. He soon showed signs of becoming a dilettante in educational matters. The sordid pedantry of the teachers at state and municipal schools may have been the primary cause. However, in the search for something better it was forgotten how inadequate any teaching must be that is not given by specialists.

Up till then the course of my father's life had gone pretty much as he wished. I was meant to follow in his footsteps, but more easily, and to go further. He valued my natural gifts the more as he lacked them himself; for what he had achieved was done only by incredibly hard work, persistence and constant repetition. He frequently assured me, at various stages of my life, sometimes seriously, sometimes jokingly, that if he had had my talents he would have behaved quite differently and not have played fast and loose with them.

Being quick-witted and having a good memory, I very soon outgrew the teaching which my father and the rest of the teachers could give me; at the same time, I had no real grounding in anything. I disliked grammar, in which I could see nothing but an arbitrary law; the rules struck me as ridiculous because they had so many exceptions, all of which I was also supposed to learn. And if it had not been for the rhyming Latin primer, which I enjoyed beating out and

chanting to myself, I would have been in a bad way. We also had a geography book in mnemonic verse, with feeble rhymes that helped us to learn our lessons. For instance:

“Upper-Yssel, lots of marsh  
Makes the land so grim and harsh.”

I found it easy to learn syntax; and I was quick in discovering the meaning of a thing. In rhetoric, composition and the like nobody could touch me, although I often had to step down because of grammatical mistakes. These essays gave my father particular pleasure and he often rewarded me for them with gifts of money that were quite large for a boy of my age.

My father taught my sister Italian in the same room where I had to learn Cellarius by heart. As I did not take long to finish my task and then had to go on sitting there quietly, I used to listen from behind my book and rapidly picked up Italian, which appealed to me as an amusing variant of Latin.

I was early remarkable for my memory and my ability to understand the relations between things, just like all those other children who have drawn attention to themselves for their precocity. So my father could scarcely wait for the time for me to go to the university. He early declared that I, too, was to study law in Leipzig, a city for which he still had a great affection, and then was to move on to another university to take my degree. He did not mind which I chose for my second university, with the exception of Göttingen, to which he had an aversion, I do not know why; it was a disappointment to me, as this was the place which had inspired me with great confidence and high hopes.

He also told me that I was to go to Wetzlar and Regensburg, then to Vienna and from there to Italy—although he often said that one must see Paris first, because coming back from Italy one found nothing else worth looking at.

I liked to listen to these splendid tales of my future career as a student, especially as it always ended up with a story of Italy and finally a description of Naples. At such times his

usual dry gravity seemed to dissolve and he became quite enthusiastic. And so we children developed a passionate wish to visit that paradise ourselves.

*[Goethe here describes his lessons, his reading, which included "Robinson Crusoe," and attacks of measles and chicken-pox ]*

## GRANDPARENTS AND AUNTS

IT was generally to our grandparents that we made our escape from these didactic and pedagogic tyrannies\* Their house was in the Friedberger Gasse and had apparently once been a stronghold; when approaching it one saw nothing but a big gate with battlements extending to the neighbouring houses on each side. On entering, one went through a narrow passage and came out into a fairly large courtyard surrounded by buildings of unequal height, which had now all been combined into one house. We usually rushed straight into the garden, which lay behind the buildings and was of some considerable size and very well kept: the walks were framed with vine trellises, part of the ground was reserved for vegetables and another part for flowers, which blossomed in the borders and beds in a brilliant kaleidoscope of many colours, from spring until autumn. On the long wall facing south were well-grown espalier peach trees, on which we could watch the forbidden fruits lusciously ripening all through the summer. But we avoided this part of the garden, because we were not allowed to indulge our childish greed, and turned to the other side, where an endless row of currant and gooseberry bushes yielded us delicious crops until well into the autumn. We were also very interested in a tall, wide-spreading, ancient mulberry tree, not only because of its fruits, but also because we had been told that silk-worms lived on its leaves. In these tranquil surroundings Grandfather was to be found every evening, pottering about, busy with the more delicate operations involved in cultivating fruits and flowers, while a gardener did the rougher work. He was never discouraged by the amount of work needed to cultivate a fine species of carnation. With his own hands he would carefully tie the branches of the peach trees into a fan-

\* Goethe's father was applying his educational theories to his son.



shaped pattern on the trellis, so that the fruit should have plenty of space to grow and ripen. The sorting out of tulip, hyacinth and other bulbs, and also their storage, was something that he would not leave to anyone else. And I like to remember how eagerly he busied himself with the grafting of the various species of roses. To protect himself from the thorns he would put on a pair of those old-style leather gauntlets, of which three pairs were presented to him every year at the Pipers' Court, so that he was never short of them. Besides this, he always wore a dressing-gown rather like a judge's robe, and a black velvet cap on his head, so that one might have thought he was got up as a character half-way between Alcinous and Laertes.

He was every bit as regular and precise in his gardening as in his official business. Before he came downstairs, he had always drawn up the list of cases for the next day and read through the documents. In the morning he went to the town hall, dined on his return, and then dozed in his armchair; and so one day passed just like another. He spoke little and never showed even a trace of excitement, and I do not remember ever having seen him angry. Everything around him was old-fashioned. I never saw any change made in his panelled study. Apart from legal works, his library contained only early accounts of travel and sea-faring, explorations and discovery. Altogether I have never known anything that gave me such a sense of imperturbable peace and solid permanence.

But what intensified to the highest degree the reverence we had for this dignified old gentleman was our conviction that he possessed the gift of prophecy, particularly in matters affecting himself and his own destiny. Although he never went into definite details except in speaking to Grandmother, we all knew that he had significant dreams telling him what was going to happen. For instance, at the time when he was still one of the younger counsellors, he assured his wife that he would be elected to the bench of magistrates when the next vacancy occurred. And when soon afterwards one of the magistrates did in fact die of a stroke, on the day of

the election and balloting he gave orders at home that preparations should quietly be made for the reception of guests and people coming to offer their congratulations. Sure enough, the decisive gold ball fell to his lot. He gave his wife the following account of the simple dream which foretold this. He had seen himself at the usual full assembly of the council, where everything was proceeding in the traditional manner, when suddenly the now deceased magistrate rose from his seat, stepped down and bowed to him, very civilly inviting him to take the vacant place, and then left the room.

Something similar happened when the former burgomaster died. In such a case there was not much delay in filling the position, for fear that the Emperor might suddenly remember his old right of appointing burgomasters. This time a court messenger came round at midnight summoning an extraordinary session for the next morning. As the light in this man's lantern was guttering, he asked for a small piece of candle in order to be able to go on his way. "Give him a whole candle," my grandfather said to the womenfolk. "After all, he is having this trouble on my behalf." His words soon turned out to be true: he was made burgomaster. What was especially remarkable was that although his representative was the third and last to draw in the balloting, the two silver balls came out first, so leaving the gold one at the bottom of the bag for him.

The other dreams of which we came to know of were likewise utterly prosaic, simple and without a trace of anything fantastic. I also remember as a boy rummaging among his books and agenda and finding among notes on gardening such remarks as: "X came to me last night and said . . ." with the name and message written in code; or: "Last night I saw . . ." with the rest again in code, except for the conjunctions and similar words from which nothing could be understood.

It was also remarkable that other people who normally showed no trace of clairvoyance while near him temporarily

became subject to premonitions, accompanied by sensory perceptions, connected with cases of illness and death occurring at the time, though at a distance. However, none of his children or grandchildren inherited this faculty. On the contrary, most of them were vigorous, lively people with both feet firmly planted in reality.

While speaking of my relatives, I want to record my gratitude for much kindness they showed me in my childhood. For instance, we were kept busy and amused in all sorts of ways when we went to visit the second daughter,\* married to the grocer and druggist Melber, whose house and shop stood on the market-place, in the busiest and most crowded part of the city. Here we had great fun looking out of the windows at the jostling and bustling in which we would otherwise have been afraid of getting lost. And although at first all that interested us among the many kinds of goods in the shop was the liquorice and the brown stamped pastilles made from it, we gradually became acquainted with the great variety of things flowing in and out of such a store. This aunt of ours was the liveliest among the brothers and sisters. While my mother, as a young woman, liked sitting neatly dressed with some delicate needlework or reading a book, this sister went about the neighbourhood to look after neglected children, nursing them, brushing and combing them and carrying them about, as indeed she did with me for a good while. At times of public celebrations, such as the coronations, nothing could keep her at home. Even as a small child she had scrambled for the money scattered on such occasions. A story was told of how she had once made quite a good collection and was complacently gazing at it, holding it in the palm of her hand, when someone gave her hand a knock, so that the hard-won booty was lost in an instant. She was also thoroughly proud of the fact that once when the Emperor Charles VII was driving past, at a moment when the crowd was silent she stood up on a kerbstone and called out an enthusiastic "Long live the Emperor!" right into the carriage,

\*The second of the Textor sisters, Goethe's maternal aunt.

and he took off his hat to her in gracious thanks for this pert attention.

Her whole house, too, was full of life and gaiety, and we children owed her many a happy hour.

We had a second aunt, who lived more quietly, as indeed suited her temperament; she was married to Pastor Starck of St. Catherine's Church. He led a secluded life, as one would expect of a man with his convictions and his position; he also had a fine library. It was here that I first came to know Homer, in a prose translation to be found in the seventh part of the *New Collection of Most Notable Travels*, edited by Herr von Loen, with the title, *Homer's Description of the Conquest of the Trojan Kingdom*, with engravings in the French theatrical style. These pictures so perverted my imagination that for a long time I could only picture the Homeric heroes in this guise. The story itself I liked immensely. My only criticism of the work was that it gave no account of the conquest of Troy, but broke off short with the death of Hector. My uncle, to whom I aired my objections, referred me to Virgil, who completely satisfied my demands.

## THE FRENCH OCCUPATION OF 1759

[*In the Seven Years' War, the Textors' sympathies were with Austria, Goeihe's father's with Prussia, which differences led to family disputes.*]

THE easy-going citizens found it hard to bear this unexpected burden, of a sort unknown for many years. No one found it more intolerable than my father, who had to take foreign military lodgers into his brand-new house, giving up his well-furnished and usually locked reception rooms to them, and surrendering to other people's whims the things that he was in the habit of arranging and supervising so meticulously. And the worst of it, to his way of thinking, was that he with his Prussian sympathies should now have to stand a French siege in his own house. It must be confessed, however, that if he had been capable of taking the situation lightly, speaking French as well as he did and capable of behaving with dignity and ease, he might have spared us many dismal hours. For it was the King's Lieutenant who was billeted with us; and although he was an army officer he only had to deal with civil cases, disputes between soldiers and civilians, debts and disagreements. Count Thorane, of Grasse in Provence, not far from Antibes, was a tall, gaunt, serious-looking man, with a face very badly marked by small-pox, fiery black eyes, and a self-contained, dignified manner. His first visit promised well for the inmates of the house. There was a discussion about the various rooms—which were to be given up and which kept for the family; and when the count heard there was a room with a picture collection, although it was already dark he asked if he might at least have a quick look round the pictures by candlelight. He evidently got great pleasure from it and made himself very agreeable to my father, who showed him round. When he heard that most of the artists were still alive, living in Frankfurt or the neighbourhood, he declared that he was very eager to get to know them soon and to commission work from them.

But even these advances where art was concerned failed to alter my father's attitude or modify his stubbornness. He put up with the inevitable, but quite passively kept his distance; and even this unusual state of things was unendurable to him down to the most trifling detail.

Count Thorane certainly behaved with the utmost decorum. He would not even have his maps pinned up on the walls, in order not to spoil the new wallpaper. His men were deft, quiet and well-behaved. But the fact remained that his office hours went on all through the day and part of the night, one plaintiff following another, prisoners being brought in and taken away, and officers and adjutants being let in and out; and on top of all this the count kept open table every day. All this in a house of moderate size, intended for only one family and with only one open staircase connecting all the floors, meant that there was a swarming and buzzing like that in a beehive, even though everything was managed as quietly, reasonably and efficiently as possible.

Fortunately there was a mediator between the master of the house, who was irritable and daily becoming more of a hypochondriac and a burden to himself, and his well-meaning but somewhat serious and pedantic military guest; this was an easy-going interpreter, a handsome, plump, cheerful man, a native of Frankfurt, who spoke fluent French, could manage any sort of situation and took all sorts of little annoyances as a mere joke. It was he who explained to the count what difficulties my mother was in as a result of her husband's state of mind. He put the case so cleverly—the whole position with the new, not yet completely furnished house, the owner's taste for seclusion and his preoccupation with his children's education, and the rest of it—that the count, who himself took a great pride in absolute justice, incorruptibility and honourable behaviour, made a point of being a model of what a billeted officer should be. And he did in fact keep to this resolve through all sorts of vicissitudes in the several years of his stay.

My mother knew some Italian, as did everyone in the

family, and now she at once decided to learn French. As she had been godmother to one of the interpreter's children during these eventful days, this man—who lived just opposite—took an extra interest in our family and devoted every moment of leisure to teaching my mother, with special attention to the expressions she needed in speaking to the count. It turned out very well. The count was flattered by the trouble the lady of the house had taken at her age, and as he had some sense of humour and a certain taste for stiff gallantry, the best of relations were established. And my mother and the interpreter in alliance could twist him round their little fingers.

If only it had been possible to cheer my father up, this altered state of things need not have been seriously inconvenient. The count's principles were very strict indeed. He refused even such gifts as anyone in his position was entitled to accept; he angrily refused anything remotely resembling a bribe, and even punished those who offered it; and his men had strict orders not to cause the owner of the house any expense whatsoever. On the other hand, we children were sent all sorts of good things from his dessert. I think it deserves mention, as a sign of how innocent those times were, that my mother once grieved us deeply by pouring away the ice-cream sent to us from the count's table, because she could not imagine how real ice, however much sweetened it might be, could possibly agree with anyone's stomach.

Apart from these dainties, which we did gradually come to enjoy and digest, we children also found it quite pleasant being to some extent released from regular lessons and strict discipline. Father's bad temper increased; he could not resign himself to the inevitable. How miserable he made himself, Mother, the interpreter, the councillors and all his friends, merely in the attempt to get rid of the count! It was useless telling him that such a man's presence in the house, in these circumstances, was a downright godsend, and that the count's leaving would only result in continual changes of billeted officers or men. None of these arguments had any effect on him. He found the present state of things so unbearable and

resented it so much that he could not imagine anything worse.

So his activity, which at other times was mainly expended on us, was paralysed. He no longer examined us so strictly in the work that he had set us; and we did our best to satisfy our curiosity in military and other public matters, not only in the house but out in the streets. This was all the easier now that the front door was open day and night, only guarded by sentries, who did not bother about fidgety children running to and fro.

The various cases that had to be settled by the King's Lieutenant acquired a peculiar character through the fact that he liked to point his decisions with humorous, witty and amusing remarks. His judgements were absolutely just; his style of summing-up was good-humoured and whimsical. He seemed to have modelled himself on the Duke of Osuna. Hardly a day passed without the interpreter amusing my mother and us with some such anecdote. This jovial man had made a small collection of these judgments of Solomon. I remember only the general impression, but no story in particular.

We gradually got to know more and more of the count's admirable character. The man himself was very well aware of his peculiarities. At times he suffered from a kind of depression, hypochondria or whatever one might call the evil spirit that took possession of him, and then he kept to his room for hours, sometimes for days, seeing no one but his personal servant and refusing to deal even with urgent business. But as soon as the cloud lifted he reappeared, as kind, good-humoured and efficient as ever. From his personal servant, Saint-Jean, a good-natured, skinny little man, we gathered that years ago, while in such a state of mind, he had caused a great misfortune, and that now in this important position, where he was so much in the public eye, he was determined to guard against similar aberrations.

*[The count patronised the father's favourite painters, but he remained unreconciled.]*



## THE FRENCH THEATRE

MY grandfather had given me a free pass which I used every day, to my father's annoyance but with the support of my mother. There I used to sit in the pit, gazing at a performance in a foreign language, paying all the more attention to movements, miming and expression as I understood little or nothing of what was being said, and so had to rely on gestures and intonation for my entertainment. Comedy I understood least of all, because it was spoken quickly and dealt with things of ordinary life, for which I did not know the words. Tragedies were acted less frequently; the measured pace and rhythm of the alexandrine and the more general meaning of the speeches made them much easier for me to understand in every way. It was not long before I opened the Racine which I found in my father's library, and declaimed the plays for myself in the theatrical manner, as well as I could reproduce what my ear had picked up. I put much feeling into it, without yet being able to understand the gist of a whole speech. I even learnt passages by heart and recited them like a parrot; this came all the more easily since I was already used to memorising passages of the Bible, of a kind unintelligible to a child, and reciting them in the manner of Protestant preachers. The French verse comedy was very popular at that time; the plays of Destouches, Marivaux and La Chaussée were often performed, and I can still distinctly remember various characteristic figures. I remember less of Molière's plays. What made most impression on me was Lemierre's *Hypermnestra*, then a new play, which was carefully produced and performed repeatedly. I was charmed with *Devin de Village*, *Rose et Colas*, and *Annette et Lubin*. I can still call up a vision of the beribboned lads and lasses and their movements. It was not long before

I felt the urge to explore behind the scenes, and I found many chances of doing so. I had not always the patience to sit through the whole performance, and spent a good deal of time playing with other children of my age, either in the corridors, or, in warm weather, outside the door. There we made friends with a nice-looking, bright boy belonging to the company, whom I had seen acting various small parts. He got on best with me, as I tried out my French on him; and he became all the more attached to me as there was no other boy of his age and nationality at the theatre or in the neighbourhood. We also met at other times, and he seldom left me in peace even during performances. He had a quite delightful streak of braggadocio, chattered away incessantly and engagingly and had so many stories to tell of his adventures, pranks and other extraordinary things that I was tremendously entertained. From him I learnt more of the language, and how to talk it, in four weeks than anyone could have imagined possible; and nobody knew how I had suddenly become so fluent in a foreign language, as though by a miracle.

In the very first days of our acquaintance he took me on to the stage with him and also to the green-room, where the actors and actresses rested during the intervals and also changed their clothes. The building was neither suitable nor convenient, for the theatre had been squeezed into a concert hall, and there were no separate rooms behind the stage for the actors. A fairly large ante-room, formerly used for card-parties, had to do for both sexes; and they seemed to be as little embarrassed by each other as by us children, not always observing decency when changing their costumes. I had never seen anything like it before, but I soon became used to it, and after I had been there several times it seemed quite natural.

I soon developed a special interest of my own. Apart from his bragging, young Derones—this name will do for the boy with whom I had become friends—was properly brought up and well behaved. He introduced me to his sister, who was a few years older than ourselves, a very nice girl with a good

figure, regular features, dark complexion, and black hair and eyes; there was something quiet, even sad, about her. I did all I could to please her; but I could not make her take any notice of me. Girls usually think themselves superior to younger boys, and while they are on the look-out for young men, they tend to assume an aunt-like manner to any boy who gives them his first love. There was also a younger brother whom I scarcely knew.

Sometimes, when their mother was at rehearsals or out visiting, we met at their lodgings to play games or talk. I never went there without taking the girl a flower, fruit or something of the kind, which she did indeed accept very graciously, thanking me in the politest manner. But I never saw her sad gaze brighten up, and received no other sign of her attention. At last I thought I had discovered her secret. The boy showed me a pastel-portrait of a handsome man behind the elegant silk curtains of his mother's bed. He told me with a knowing look that this was not actually papa, but just the same as papa. From his glorification of this man and the stories he told in his complicated and boastful way, I gathered that the girl was the husband's child and the other two children those of the *ami de la maison*. This, it seemed to me, was the explanation of her melancholy appearance; and I loved her all the more for it.

My affection for this girl helped me to put up with the tall stories told by her brother, who did not always know where to stop. I often had to endure long and detailed accounts of his heroic deeds and the duels that he had fought on many occasions, though without ever harming his opponent, it all having been done purely for the sake of honour. He had always succeeded in disarming his adversary, and then forgiven him. He said he was so expert in sending his opponent's sword flying out of his hand that he had once got himself into real difficulties when the weapon landed in a high tree, from which it was not easy to get it down again.

\* \* \*

But even all this theatrical variety could not always keep us

children in the theatre. In fine weather we played outside and round the building, getting up to all sorts of mischief which was not in keeping with our appearance, particularly on Sundays and holidays. For at these times, like other boys of my social class, I appeared dressed as I was in the fairy-tale,\* my hat under my arm, and wearing a little sword with a big silk bow on the hilt. Once, when we had been fooling for some time and Derones had joined us, it occurred to him to insist that I had insulted him and must give him satisfaction. Although I did not know what was the matter, I accepted his challenge and was about to draw. But he assured me that in such cases it was customary to go to some secluded place where the affair could be settled more conveniently. We therefore retired behind some barns and fell into position. The duel took its course in a somewhat theatrical style, the blades clashed, and the thrusts went wide. But, in the heat of battle, he got the point of his sword caught in the ribbon on my hilt and pierced it. He then assured me that honour was completely satisfied and embraced me, also in a thoroughly theatrical way; then we went off to the nearest coffee-house to recover from the excitement over a glass of almond milk and became firmer friends than ever.

\*       \*       \*

My passion for the French theatre grew with every performance. I never missed an evening, although when I joined my family at supper after the play and often got nothing but leftovers, I had to endure my father's constant reproaches. He did not think much of the theatre; he said it was useless and could not lead to anything. On such occasions I generally produced all the arguments used in defence of the stage by other people in the same situation as myself. The bad who prospered and the good in misfortune were always restored to their right places in the end by means of poetic justice. Enthusiastically I quoted the beautiful examples of crime

\* 'The New Paris,' a tale told by the young Goethe to his friends, of which he was himself the hero. It is interpolated in the early part of the *Autobiographies*.

punished in *Miss Sara Sampson* and *The Merchant of London*. But I often came off worst when *Les Fourberies de Scapin* or the like were on the programme and I had to listen to reproaches about the satisfaction that the public got from the knaveries of intriguing servants and the successful escapades of wild young men. Neither side ever convinced the other. But my father was very soon reconciled to the stage when he saw how incredibly fast I was making progress in French.

It is a fundamental weakness of human nature to want to do the thing one sees someone else doing, regardless of whether one has any talent for it or not. Now I had almost gone through the whole repertoire of the French stage. Some plays were coming round for the second or even third time, and I had seen and got to know everything from the loftiest tragedy to the most frivolous sketch. And just as I had once, as a child, boldly imitated Terence, nothing could stop me now, as a boy, with so much more to spur me on, from trying my hand at the French drama to the best of my ability. At that time some semi-mythological, semi-allegorical plays in Piron's style were being performed; having a touch of parody, they were very popular. I particularly enjoyed these performances—a gay Mercury with his little gold wings, the thunderbolt of a disguised Jupiter, an amorous Danae or whatever the beauty was called who received a visit from the gods, if indeed it was not a shepherdess or huntress to whom they descended. And as my head was full of such odds and ends from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Pomey's *Pantheon Mythicum*, I had soon put together a little play of the same sort in my imagination; all I can remember of it now is that the setting was pastoral and that there was no shortage of princesses, princes or gods. Mercury, especially, had become so real to me that I could almost swear I had seen him with my own eyes.

Having copied it out myself with great care and neatness, I submitted it to my friend Derones, who accepted it very ceremoniously and with the air of a real patron. He glanced

through the manuscript, pointed out a few grammatical errors, said some of the speeches were too long, and finally promised to read the work more carefully and critically at his leisure. When I modestly asked whether he thought the piece could be performed, he assured me that it was by no means impossible. In the theatre, he said, a great deal depended on being in with the right people. He would be delighted to take me under his wing, but the whole thing must be kept a secret; for he himself had once surprised the management with a play of his own and it would certainly have been produced, had it not been discovered too early that he was the author. I promised him to be as silent as the grave, already in my mind's eye seeing the title of my play in large print placarded up at the corners of the streets and squares.

Frivolous though my friend was, this was too perfect an opportunity for playing the expert. He read the play very carefully and, sitting down with me to make a few trivial alterations, in the course of the discussion he turned the whole play upside-down, until no brick was left standing on another. Crossing out, adding to it, removing one character, substituting another, he treated it in the most wildly wanton manner, until my hair stood on end. My belief that he knew what he was talking about made me put up with it; for he had often told me so much about Aristotle's three unities, the rules of the French drama, dramatic probability, the harmony of the verse and all the rest, that I could not help regarding him as not merely familiar with the subject but as one who really understood it. He denounced the English and sneered at the Germans. In fact, he trotted out before me the entire dramaturgical litany that I was so often to hear again in the course of my life.

Like the boy in the fable, I took the mutilated child of my imagination home and tried to restore it to life. But in vain. However, as I refused to give it up entirely, I got our clerk to make a fair copy from my first manuscript, with only a few changes. This I then presented to my father and achieved

at least one thing, that for a time now he let me have my supper in peace when I came in from the theatre.

*[The French retired at the end of the war (1760), and the next five years were spent in private lessons, in drawing and music, English, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, which last led the precocious youngster into disputes with his master, Rector Albrecht, on the literal truth of the Bible narrative.]*

## FIRST LOVE AND THE CORONATION

**M**EANWHILE, I was quite unexpectedly involved in affairs that nearly got me into very serious trouble, and at least for a time caused me embarrassment and distress. My friendship with the boy whom I have referred to as Pylades\* continued into our 'teens. Although we saw each other less frequently, because our parents were not on the best of terms, whenever we did meet we felt the same old upsurge of friendly warmth. Once we met in those very pleasant leafy walks between the inner and outer St.-Gallen Gate. The first thing he said to me when we had shaken hands was: "It's always the same thing with your poems. I read the last ones you gave me to some jolly friends of mine, and they refuse to believe you wrote them." "Never mind," I replied, "we shall go on writing poems for the fun of it. Don't let us worry about what the others may think and say."

"Here comes one of the unbelievers," my friend said.

"Don't let us talk about it," was my reply. "What's the use? We shall not be able to convert them in any case."

"Not a bit of it," my friend said. "I won't let him off so easily."

After a short conversation of no importance, my well-meaning friend could not restrain himself any longer, and said, rather irritably: "This is my friend who wrote the poems that you liked and wouldn't believe he could have written."

"I'm sure he won't be offended by that," the other said. "After all, we are paying him a compliment by thinking that the writing of such verses requires much more learning than he can have at his age"

I made some random answer.

But my friend went on: "It won't be much trouble to prove it. Give him a subject and he'll write you a poem in a twinkling."

\*A childhood friend.



As I had no objection, the other asked me if I would try my hand at composing a dainty little love-letter in verse from a shy girl, declaring her love to a young man.

"Nothing could be easier," I answered. "If we only had something to write on."

The other produced his pocket-book, which had plenty of blank pages, and I sat down on a bench to write. Meanwhile, they walked up and down, not taking their eyes off me. I at once began to imagine the situation vividly and thought how nice it would be if some pretty young girl were really in love with me and were to tell me so in verse or prose; and so I set about my declaration without delay, quickly working it out in a metre midway between that of the ballad and that of the madrigal, and as simply as possible. And when I read the little poem to them, the doubter was overcome by amazement and my friend was quite delighted. I could not very well refuse to let the stranger have the poem, especially as it was written in his notebook, and was quite glad for him to have documentary proof of my abilities. He went away, after repeatedly assuring me of his admiration and friendship, and saying that he hoped to meet us more often. We agreed to go on a trip into the country together soon.

We made the expedition with several other young men of the same sort. Although they belonged to the middle and perhaps even the lower classes, they were by no means without brains, nor, as they had had some schooling, without general knowledge and even a degree of polish. There are many ways of earning a living in a large and wealthy city, and they got along by doing clerical work for lawyers or coaching lower-class children up to a higher standard of education than was provided by the elementary schools. They held confirmation classes for older children, did odd jobs for merchants and brokers, and in the evenings, particularly on Sundays and holidays, indulged in some frugal entertainment.

On the way, while singing the praises of my little love-letter, they confessed to me that they had made very amusing use of it. It had been copied out in a disguised handwriting

and, with the addition of a few private allusions, slipped into the hands of a conceited young man who was now firmly convinced that a lady whom he had admired from a distance was frantically in love with him and looking for an opportunity to make closer acquaintance. They also told me in confidence that this young man was very eager to reply in verse, but neither he nor they had the necessary skill; so they implored me to compose the desired answer.

Mystifications always have been a source of amusement to idle, and more or less intelligent, people. A taste for mischief or a complacent indulgence in malice amuses those who do not know what to do with themselves and cannot exert any good influence on others. At no age are people entirely free from such temptations. We had often played tricks on each other when we were little boys; indeed, many games are based on such mystifications and hoaxes. The practical joke under discussion did not seem to me to go any further than this, and so I agreed. They gave me a number of details to be worked into the letter, and it was finished by the time we went home.

A short time afterwards, through my friend, I received a pressing invitation to join an evening party with the same people. The party was being given by that amorous young man, who particularly wanted to thank me for having rendered such valuable services as poetic secretary.

We met fairly late; the meal was very simple and the wine drinkable. The talk consisted almost exclusively of jeering at our host, not a very wide-awake sort of man, who, after reading the letter over and over again, was not far from believing he had written it himself.

Being naturally warm-hearted, I did not really enjoy this malicious performance, and I was soon sick of the continuous harping on the same subject. I would certainly have spent a boring evening, if I had not been revived by the unexpected appearance of another person. When we arrived, the table was already neatly laid, with sufficient wine, and we sat down and were left alone, without any need of being waited on. When the wine ran out, one of us shouted for the maid. But, instead

of her, an uncommonly beautiful girl came in, a startling contrast to these surroundings.

"What is it you want?" she asked, after having said good-evening to us pleasantly "The maid is ill in bed. Can I do anything?"

"We're short of wine," one of us said. "It would be very nice if you would fetch us a few bottles."

"Do, Gretchen," another said "It's only over the road."

"Of course," she answered, took a few empty bottles from the table, and hurried away.

Her figure was even prettier from behind. The cap was poised so adroitly on the small head, and the slender neck formed a graceful line with the shoulders. Everything about her was exquisite; and it was easier to look at her now that one's attention was not primarily attracted by the tranquil, clear gaze and lovely mouth. I reproached my drinking companions for having sent the young girl out alone in the dark. They merely laughed at me, and I was reassured when she returned in a few minutes—the tavern was only across the road.

"Now you must sit down and have a drink with us," one of the company said.

She did, but unfortunately not near me. She drank a glass to our health and left soon, advising us not to stay up too long and not to make so much noise, as "Mother" was just going to bed. It was our host's mother whom she meant.

From that moment the vision of this girl haunted me wherever I went. It was the first time any woman had made a real impression on me. As I could not find an excuse for going to the house to see her, I began to go to church in order to meet her there and soon discovered where she sat; and so I could gaze at her to my heart's content all through the long Protestant service. On the way out I did not dare to speak to her, and even less to offer to see her home; I was in the seventh heaven that she seemed to notice me and nod in reply to my bow. But soon I was lucky enough to get to know her better.

My friends had succeeded in making that love-sick young

man, whose poetic secretary I had become, believe that the letter written in his name had really been sent to the woman concerned, and at the same time worked him up into a state of great suspense about the answer, which was soon to follow, and which, of course, they expected me to write. The mischievous conspirators sent me an urgent message by Pylades to exert all my ingenuity and all my poetic gifts in making a perfect job of it.

In the hope of seeing my fair lady again, I set about it at once, now with everything in mind that I should like to read myself if it were written by her. So deeply did I become absorbed that after a while what I had written seemed to reflect her appearance, manner and personality to such an extent that I could not help wishing it were really so, and was lost in rapture at the mere possibility of her writing such a letter to me. So I deluded myself, while believing that I was making a fool of somebody else; and this was later to bring me much joy and also much trouble. By the time I was sent a reminder about it, I had finished and promised to come. I was there at the appointed time. Only one of my friends was at home; Gretchen was sitting by the window, spinning, and the mother looked in from time to time. The young man asked me to read it to him, which I did, with some emotion, glancing across the paper at the lovely girl. And as I seemed to notice that she was faintly disturbed, even blushing slightly, I went on reading still more expressively the things that I would have wished to hear from her. Her cousin, who had interrupted me several times with approving remarks, finally asked me to make some alterations. There were, in fact, some details which applied better to Gretchen than to the lady who was supposed to have written the letter and who was of some social standing, wealthy, well-known and respected in the town. After the young man had pointed out the necessary changes and fetched writing materials, he went out for a short time on an errand. I remained sitting on the bench against the wall, at the large table, trying out the corrections on the big slate which almost covered the table, using the slate-pencil

that always lay on the window-sill, these things being used for working out sums and making odd notes and for messages left by people coming and going.

After various attempts, scribbling things down and rubbing them out again, I exclaimed impatiently: "I can't do it!" "So much the better," Gretchen said calmly. "I would rather you could not do it at all. You should not become mixed up in such things."

She stood up from her spinning-wheel and, coming over to the table where I was, she lectured me on the subject sternly and sensibly, though not without friendliness. "It looks like a harmless practical joke. It may be a joke, but it is not harmless. I have known several cases when our young men got into serious trouble as a result of such mischief."

"But what can I do?" I replied. "The letter is written, and they are counting on me to make the alterations."

"Take my advice," she said, "and do not alter it. Fold it up, put it in your pocket, and go and try to put the matter right through your friend. I will say my little piece, too. For although I am only a poor girl and dependent on these relatives of mine—who certainly don't mean any serious harm, but sometimes do very reckless things for the sake of amusement and profit—when they asked me to copy out the first letter, I refused. They had to write it out themselves in a disguised handwriting, and so far as I am concerned, they can do the same with this one. And why should you, a young man of good family, well-off and independent, make yourself a tool for such machinations, from which no good can come—and perhaps even trouble for yourself?"

I was delighted to listen to this long speech, for she generally spoke very little. I loved her more than ever. I was overcome by my feelings and said: "I am not so independent as you think. And what is the good of being well-off, if I have not got the most precious thing I could wish for?"

She took my draft of the poem and read it through very charmingly, half to herself. "That's rather pretty," she said,

stopping at an apparently naive turn of phrase. "What a pity it is not meant for a better purpose—that it isn't true!"

"Ah, that would be wonderful!" I exclaimed. "How happy one would be to receive such a declaration of affection from a girl one really cared for!"

"That is not the sort of thing that happens every day," she answered "Yet nothing is impossible."

"For instance," I went on, "if somebody who knows you and thinks a great deal of you, somebody who is very much in love with you, put such a poem in front of you, and pleaded with all his heart and soul—what would you do?" I pushed the sheet of paper towards her again, after she had pushed it back to me. She smiled, hesitated for a moment, then took the pen and put her name to the letter.

Wild with delight, I jumped up to take her in my arms.

"Please don't kiss me," she said. "It makes it all so vulgar. But let us love each other if we can."

I had taken the sheet of paper and put it in my pocket. "No one shall have it," I said. "The thing is over and done with. You have saved me."

"You must save yourself just a little more," she exclaimed. "Hurry up, and go before the others come! It would be awkward for you."

I could hardly tear myself away from her, but she asked me to go, so sweetly, taking my right hand in both of hers and pressing it gently. I was not far from tears and noticed that her eyes were wet, too. I pressed my cheek against her hands and hurried away. Never before in my life had my mind been in such a whirl.

Innocent young people's first love always has a spiritual turn. Nature seems to intend each sex to see the other as the embodiment of the good and the beautiful. So it was with me; this girl's presence and my love for her opened up a new world of beauty and perfection for me. I read my poem through over and over again, gazed at the signature, kissed it and pressed it to my heart, overjoyed by this sweet confession. But the more my delight increased, the sadder I felt

at not being able to visit her at once, to see her and talk to her again, for I dreaded her cousins' reproaches and attempts to talk me over. I did not know how to get in touch with my good friend Pylades, who might have settled the matter. So next Sunday I set out for Niederrad, where these young men were in the habit of going, and there I found them. I was most astonished that instead of being annoyed and stand-offish, they welcomed me cheerfully. The youngest one in particular was very friendly, took me by the hand and said: "You played rather a bad trick on us the other day and we were thoroughly annoyed with you. But after you had gone off with the poem, we had a better idea, which we might not have thought of otherwise. To show there's no ill-will, we shall be delighted to be your guests today and tell you all about what we're so proud of. We are sure you will like it, too."

I was somewhat embarrassed by this suggestion, for I had just enough money with me to pay for myself and perhaps one friend, but certainly not to entertain a party, especially one that did not always know where to stop. I was all the more surprised by the proposal, as they usually made a point of honour of each paying for himself. They were amused at my embarrassment, and the same young man went on: "Let's first sit down in the arbour, and then you shall hear the whole story." When we were seated, he explained: "When you took away the love-letter the other day, we talked the whole thing over again and came to the conclusion that we were misusing your talent for nothing but to tease other people and perhaps get ourselves into trouble, out of a sheer love of mischief, when we could be using it to everybody's advantage. Look, here I have a commission for a wedding-poem and another for a dirge. The latter must be done at once, the former will do in a week. If you will do them—and it's no bother for you—it will be as good as if you treated us twice, and we shall be in your debt for a long time."

I liked this proposal in every way. From childhood I had been rather envious of those occasional poems that used to

circulate every week, even dozens of them appearing in celebration of fashionable weddings, for I thought I could do them just as well as other people, if not better. Here, now, I had the chance to prove my skill and to see myself in print into the bargain. I accepted the offer. They gave me some personal details of the family concerned; then I walked a little way off, made a rough scheme and wrote some of the verses. But when I rejoined the party and the wine flowed freely, I began to get stuck with the poem and could not deliver it that evening. "Tomorrow evening will do," they said, "and we may as well tell you that the fee we are receiving for the dirge will be enough to pay for another party tomorrow evening. Come to our house. It's only right that Gretchen should be able to join in, as it was actually she who gave us the idea." I was beside myself with joy. On the way home I thought 'out the missing verses, wrote the whole thing down before going to bed, and copied it out very beautifully the next morning. The day seemed endlessly long. The moment it was dark I was back in that poky little house, together with my beloved Gretchen.

The young men with whom I became closely acquainted in this way were not exactly rough people, but they were rather common. I admired their energy and liked listening to them talking about the various ways and means of earning a living. They were also very fond of talking about very rich people who had started with nothing. Some of these people who had been shop-assistants had made themselves indispensable to their employers and finally rose to become their sons-in-law. Others who had started by peddling matches and the like had worked up their trade until now they were rich merchants. But for a young man who could be up and doing, undoubtedly the best way of earning a living was being an agent for wealthy men without much initiative, and running all kinds of errands for them. We all liked listening to this sort of talk, each of us feeling rather pleased with himself as he imagined, at least for the moment, that he himself had the makings of a man who would not merely get on in the



world but even rise to fame and fortune. None of us seemed to take all this more seriously than Pylades, who at last confessed that he was in love with a girl and had actually become engaged to her. His parents' financial position made it impossible for him to go to the university; but he had taken the trouble to develop a good handwriting, as well as a knowledge of book-keeping and of modern languages, and now, looking forward to setting up a home of his own, he meant to exert himself for all he was worth. Gretchen's cousins applauded him for taking this attitude, although they did not approve of such early engagements; and they went on to say that though he certainly was a decent, good fellow, he was neither energetic nor enterprising enough to achieve anything very remarkable. And when in self-defence he began to explain in detail what he meant to do and how he would set about it, the others were also egged on to give a detailed account of what they had achieved so far, and what they hoped for in the future. At last it was my turn to describe my way of living and my intended career, and while I was thinking it over, Pylades said. "There is just one condition I want to make, in fairness to us. He must not count in his material advantages. Instead, he shall make up a story and tell us how he would set about things if at this moment he had to rely completely on himself, just like us."

Gretchen, who had been spinning all this time, got up and sat down at the end of the table, as she usually did. We had already emptied several bottles, and it was in a thoroughly good humour that I began to tell my imaginary life-story.

"First of all, I beg to present my compliments," I said, "and hope that you will continue to favour me with your custom as heretofore. If, in the course of time, you can put me in the way of turning an honest penny by writing all the occasional poems that need writing, and if we do not just squander it on dining and wining, I am sure to get on. Apart from that, you must not mind if I dabble in your own line of work." And then I began to tell them what I had picked up of their occupations, and what I thought I would be

capable of doing well if I had to. Each of them had previously given an account of his earnings, and I asked them to help me draw up my own balance-sheet. Gretchen had been following the conversation very closely, sitting with her arms folded on the table and her hands clasped over them—a position that suited her very well, whether she was talking or listening. She could sit like this for a long time, only turning her head now and then, when something special caught her attention. She had sometimes put in a word, helping us along when we ran out of ideas, but most of the time she was as quiet as she always was. I did not take my eyes off her, and it can easily be imagined that I worked out my plan with her in mind. My feelings for her made what I was saying seem so true and possible that for a moment I really tricked myself into believing I was quite on my own, without support, just as I was supposed to be in my story; and the idea of making her my own made me utterly happy. Pylades' account had ended with marriage, and the question for the rest of us was whether our own plans were to take us so far. "I don't doubt it in the least," I said. "For in fact each of us needs a wife to make a home and keep him comfortable on what he scrapes together, out in the world, in such odd ways." I gave a description of the sort of wife that I would like, and it would have been strange if she had not been the image of Gretchen.

Although the fee for the dirge had gone on food and wine, the money from the wedding-poem was now hovering pleasantly near. I got the better of all my anxious fears, and as I had many friends, I managed to keep my family from knowing how I really spent my evenings. I had reached a stage where I could not get on without seeing and being near Gretchen. And they had all got so used to me that it became the most natural thing for us to meet almost every day. Now Pylades introduced his sweetheart into the house, and this couple spent many evenings with us. As an engaged couple, although still very young and inexperienced, they did not need to conceal their feelings for each other; but Gretchen's behaviour

seemed only meant to keep me at a distance. She did not give her hand to anyone, not even to me; nor would she let anyone touch her. The most she sometimes did was to sit beside me, especially when I was writing or reading aloud, and then she would affectionately put her arm on my shoulder, looking into the book or at the paper. But if I tried to be as free with her, she would slip away and not come near me for quite a while. Yet she showed this sign of affection again and again with all the simplicity and appealing charm characteristic of her movements and few gestures. I never saw her be so intimate with anyone else.

Of all the expeditions that I used to make with various parties of young men, one of the most harmless and amusing was this: we would go on board the market-boat for Höchst, study the queer passengers crowded on deck, and fool about, teasing one person or another, as various notions occurred to us. We used to get out at Höchst, where the market-boat from Mainz came in at the same time. There was an inn where they served good food and where the better-off travellers dined together before continuing their journey; for both boats then went back again. After dining, we used to go back to Frankfurt, having been for a sail in the cheapest way possible, together with a great crowd of other people. Once when I went on this trip with Gretchen's cousins, it happened that while we were dining in Höchst we were joined by a young man slightly older than ourselves, whom they knew and introduced to me. There was something very charming about him, although he was not otherwise remarkable. Having come up from Mainz, he now travelled back to Frankfurt with us, and he and I talked about all sorts of things to do with municipal government and public appointments and offices; he seemed to know a good deal about it. When we separated, he made a special point of saying goodbye to me, adding that he hoped he had made a good impression on me, as he might some time ask me for a recommendation. I did not know what he meant, but some days later the cousins gave me an explanation; they spoke highly of him and asked me to put in a word

for him with my grandfather, as it happened there was a fairly good position vacant, which this friend of theirs was very eager to have. At first I made excuses, because I had never meddled in such things; but they went on urging me until I decided to do it. As a matter of fact, I had sometimes noticed that when such appointments were being made, which were unfortunately often regarded as matters of favour, my grandmother's or an aunt's word had not been without weight. I felt I was sufficiently grown up to claim some such influence myself. So, to oblige my friends, who declared they were extremely grateful for my kindness, I overcame my awe of my grandfather and took it upon myself to deliver a petition which they gave me.

After dinner one Sunday, when Grandfather was busy in his garden, where he had a great deal to do now autumn was coming on, and I was trying to help in every way I could, after some hesitation I came out with my request and produced the petition. He looked at it and asked if I knew the young man I told him in broad outline what I knew, and he left it at that, saying: "If he is the right sort and has good testimonials, I shall consider him favourably for his own sake and for yours." That was all he said, and for a long time I heard no more about it.

Recently I had noticed that Gretchen had given up spinning and was always busy with needlework—and indeed with very fine work, which surprised me all the more since the evenings were already drawing in, with the approach of winter. I gave it no more thought, though I was perturbed at not finding her at home as usual several times when I called in the morning, and at not being able to discover where she had gone without appearing unduly inquisitive. But one day I had a very odd surprise. My sister, who was getting things ready to go to a ball, asked me to go to a milliner's and bring her some so-called Italian flowers—small, dainty things that were made in convents, myrtle, wild roses, very pretty and quite natural. I went to the shop, where I had often been before together with her. I had only just gone in and said

good-day to the proprietress, when I noticed a girl sitting in the window, wearing a lace cap and silk mantilla, and apparently young and pretty, and with a good figure so far as I could see. It was obvious that she was an assistant, for she was busy trimming a bonnet with ribbons and feathers. The milliner brought out the long box with samples of the many kinds of flowers, and I began looking at them, constantly glancing across at the girl in the window while I was trying to choose. I was startled to realise that she was amazingly like Gretchen; and, after a while, I came to the conclusion that it must be Gretchen herself. And then I had no doubts left, when she gave me a warning glance not to show that I knew her. Now I drove the milliner to despair with my picking and choosing, behaving far worse than any woman. I was really unable to settle on anything, for I was quite bewildered; and, at the same time, I enjoyed the delay because it kept me near Gretchen, whose disguise worried me, although it made her seem even more charming than usual. At last the milliner lost patience and herself picked out a bandbox full of flowers for me to take to my sister, so that she could choose for herself. She sent her errand-girl ahead with the box, and so more or less drove me out of the shop.

I had only just got home again when my father sent for me and told me it was now quite certain that the Archduke Joseph would be elected and crowned as King of Rome.\* Such a highly important event, he said, must not be allowed to take one unawares nor let pass by while one merely gaped and stared in amazement. So he wanted to go through the diaries of the last two elections and coronations with me, as well as the terms of the last election, in order to see what new ceremonies might be added on this occasion. Getting out the diaries, we spent the whole day and a good part of the night going through them, the vision of the pretty girl, sometimes in her old house-dress, sometimes in her new guise, constantly floating before me, in and out among the most majestic concerns

\* And therefore next in succession to the Empire of his mother, Maria Theresa, and his father, Francis I.

of the Holy Roman Empire. It was impossible to see her that evening, and I spent a very restless night, unable to sleep. The next day we went on eagerly with our study of these documents, and it was only towards evening that I had a chance to visit my sweetheart, whom I found once more in her usual house-dress. She smiled as she looked at me, but I did not dare to say anything in front of the others. When we had all quietly settled down together, she opened the conversation by saying: "It is not far to keep our friend in the dark about what we have decided these last few days." She then went on to describe how, after our recent discussion about getting on in the world, they had come to talk of ways in which a young woman might turn her abilities and energy to account and make good use of her time. One of her cousins had suggested that she should try working for a milliner, who happened to be in need of an assistant. They had come to an agreement with the woman, and now she went there for some hours every day and was well paid; for the sake of appearances, however, she had to wear a special dress, which she always left at the shop because she thought it was quite an unsuitable style for her general way of living. Although reassured by this explanation, I did not really like to think of her, pretty as she was, being in a shop, a public place where fashionable people were always going in and out. But I kept my jealous worries to myself. Besides, I was soon distracted by her younger cousin, who produced another commission for an occasional poem and began to give me the necessary details, insisting that I should set about working it out at once. He had already had several talks with me about how to do such things, and as I was always very ready to talk on this score, he easily got me to the point of explaining the theoretical side of it to him in detail, giving him an idea of the whole problem and using my own and other people's work as illustrations. This young man was quite intelligent, though without the slightest gift for poetry, and now he went into such details and wanted to know so much that I could not help remarking: "It almost looks as though you meant

to poach on my preserves and take away my custom." "I won't deny it," he said, smilingly, "for I shall not be doing you any damage. It won't be long before you go to the university, and in the meantime you might as well let me learn something from you." "With the greatest of pleasure," I answered. And I encouraged him to draft out a scheme himself and choose a metre in keeping with the subject, and all the rest of it.

He tackled the job seriously; but he could not make any headway with it. I had to rewrite so much of it myself that I could have done it better all on my own and more easily. But this teaching and learning, with the team-work it involved, kept us amused. Gretchen joined in, providing many good ideas, and so we were all very cheerful, even happy. By day she worked at the milliner's; we were generally together in the evenings and our happiness was not disturbed by the fact that commissions for occasional poems finally began to slacken off. What did upset us was having one of them sent back by a dissatisfied patron. However, we consoled ourselves, as we considered it our best piece of work and so felt justified in regarding him as a bad judge. Gretchen's younger cousin, who had set his mind on learning something, insisted on our doing imaginary commissions, which provided us with a great deal of entertainment; but as it did not bring in any money we had to cut down our little parties quite considerably.

*[A description of the bustle and preparations for the Election concludes with the arrival of the Elector of Mainz.]*

Let us pass over the arrival of the Elector Emmerich Joseph, incognito, in the Compostello, and return to Gretchen. Just as the crowd was thinning out, I caught sight of her in the midst of all the bustle, together with Pylades and his sweetheart; the three of them seemed to have become inseparable. We exchanged greetings and at once agreed to spend the evening together. I arrived punctually to find the usual gathering, and everyone had some remark, comment or anecdote about the various things that had struck him most. At

last Gretchen said: "All this talk confuses me even more than what actually happened today. I cannot sort out what I have seen, and there are a number of things I should very much like to have explained to me."

I replied that it would be quite easy to do that, if she would just tell me what interested her most. She did so, and as there were several points I wanted to explain, it seemed best to go over the whole thing right from the beginning. I rather neatly compared these pomps and ceremonies to a play on which the curtain was let down at will, while the players still went on acting their parts, and then raised again, the spectators being more or less able to pick up the thread. As I was inclined to be very talkative whenever I had a chance, I gave a chronological account of the whole thing from the beginning to the present day, incidentally making use of the big slate and slate-pencil in order to illustrate what I said. With only some interruptions from the others, asking questions or quibbling, I wound up my lecture to everyone's satisfaction. Gretchen, who had encouraged me a great deal by following what I said with such concentration, afterwards thanked me, saying she envied people who knew all about what went on in the world, and how things were done, and why. She wished she were a boy, and admitted very charmingly that she had already learnt a good deal from me. "If I were a boy," she said, "we would go to the university together and study seriously." The conversation continued along these lines; she decided that she must learn French, which her experience at the milliner's had shown her was essential. I asked her why she did not go there any more; for recently, finding it difficult to slip away in the evenings, I had sometimes gone past the shop during the day for her sake, just to see her for a moment. She explained that she had not wanted to run any risks by being in such a public place in these stirring times. But she meant to go back, once the city settled down again to its usual tranquillity.

Then the conversation turned to the impending Election Day. I was able to give a full account of what happened and



how it was all done, providing detailed illustrations on the slate. The most vivid of my drawings was that of the conclave room with its altars, thrones, chairs and seats. The party broke up at a reasonable hour, all of us in a particularly contented frame of mind.

Nothing can make for a more harmonious relationship between two young people who naturally have a good deal in common than if the girl is eager to learn and the young man to teach. The relationship that develops in such a way is both solid and delightful. She sees him as the creator of her intellectual life, and he sees her as a creature owing her perfection not to nature, chance, or one-sided desire, but to the fact that their two minds are bent to one purpose. And this inter-play is so sweet that we need not be surprised if such encounters between two minds, from the time of the first Abelard and of the new,\* have given rise to overpowering passions and as much happiness as disaster.

\* \* \*

During these days I scarcely had time to think. At home there was writing and copying to be done, and I did not want to miss seeing anything. So March drew to an end, the second half of it having been rich in festivities. I had promised Gretchen a detailed explanation of what had just taken place and what would happen on the coronation day. The great day was approaching. I was more concerned with how to formulate what I was going to say than with what to say; everything that I set eyes on, or read in the course of my secretarial duties, was swiftly turned into material for this all-important purpose. At last I was able to go to her house, rather late one evening, thinking somewhat complacently of how much more of a success my new lecture would be than the first one, which had not been prepared. However, things done on the spur of the moment often bring us—and others—more pleasure than the best-laid plans. I did indeed find more or less the same party, but there were several other people whom I did not know. They sat down to play cards;

\* St Preux in Rousseau's 'Nouvelle Héloïse.'

only Gretchen and her younger cousin remaining faithful to me and the slate. She told me, very engagingly, how pleased she was that, although not a native of Frankfurt, she had passed as a citizen on Election Day and so been able to watch this unique piece of pageantry. She thanked me very warmly for having looked after her and gone to the trouble of getting her admitted to all sorts of ceremonies by providing her with passes, procured by Pylades, or speaking a word to friends on her behalf.

She particularly enjoyed hearing about the imperial jewels and I promised her that we would both go and see them together, if possible. She made some little jokes when she heard that the young King had had his robes and crown tried on. I knew from where she would watch the coronation day solemnities and told her all about what would happen and especially what she would be able to see from her place.

So we forgot all about the time. I suddenly realised that it was past midnight and that unluckily I had no key and that I could not get into the house without creating a tremendous stir. I told her of the difficulty I was in. "I think, after all," she said, "the best thing would be if the party did not break up at all." The cousins and the people I did not know had already been thinking much the same, as no one knew how to fix up the strangers for the night. The matter was soon settled. Gretchen noticed that the candles were burning low, and so she brought in a big brass table-lamp already alight and well supplied with wick and oil. Then she went to make coffee.

The coffee kept us lively for some hours; but the card-playing gradually flagged, the conversation faded out, the young men's mother fell asleep in the big armchair, the strangers, tired after their journey, dozed in various corners, and Pylades and his sweetheart sat by themselves, she with her head on his shoulder, fast asleep; nor was it long before he dozed off, too. Gretchen's younger cousin, sitting opposite us by the slate, had crossed his arms on the table, put his head down on them and gone to sleep. I was sitting in the

window-bay on the far side of the table, with Gretchen beside me. We went on talking in low voices; but at last sleep overwhelmed her, too; she leaned her little head against my shoulder and was asleep in a twinkling. So I sat there, the only one awake, in the oddest situation; and then I, too, was lulled by the approach of death's mild brother, sleep. When I awoke it was already broad daylight. Gretchen was standing at the mirror, settling her little cap. She was more delightful than ever and clasped my hands most affectionately when I left. I slunk home by a roundabout way; for, regardless of our neighbour's objections, my father had had a little peephole made in the wall facing on to the little Hirschgraben, and we avoided this way when we did not want him to notice us coming home. My mother, who always intervened on our behalf, had tried to explain away my absence at breakfast that morning by suggesting I had gone out early, and so I did not get into any trouble after this innocent night out.

Taking it all in all, the infinitely various events taking place all around me made only a very simple impression on my mind. My only interest was noticing the externals of things, and I had no occupation but the tasks set me by my father and Herr von Koenigsthal,\* which did, however, show me something of the inner mechanism of it all. My only longing was for Gretchen, and my only preoccupation lay in seeing and understanding everything properly in order to go over it again with her and explain it to her. Indeed, often while a procession was passing, I would describe it to myself under my breath, to make sure of the details, in order to earn my lady-love's praise for my powers of observation and my accuracy; other people's applause and admiration I regarded as a mere incidental.

I was, of course, introduced to many exalted and noble personages; but nobody had any time to pay much attention to others, and besides, older people do not always quite know how to talk to a boy of fifteen and find out what he is like.

\*The representative of Nuremberg, who was quartered with the Goethes.

For my part, I was not very good at making the right impression on people. I could generally make them like me, but they rarely approved of me. I was always completely absorbed in whatever I was doing; but I never wondered whether it was to other people's way of thinking. I was usually either too lively or too quiet and so seemed either pushing or sulky, according to whether I was attracted by the person or not; and so, although I was considered a promising boy, I was also declared 'odd'

At last the coronation day dawned, the 3rd of April, 1764. The weather was fine, and everybody was out and about. Good places had been reserved for me and a number of relatives and friends in one of the upper storeys of the Römer,\* from where we would have a perfect view of the entire proceedings in the Square. We went there early in the morning, and now we had a bird's-eye view of the arrangements that we had looked at more closely the day before. There was the newly-built fountain with two big basins right and left, into which the double-headed eagle on the pedestal was to pour wine out of its two beaks—white wine this side and red wine that. Near it lay the oats, in a big heap, and there too was the large shed in which we had for some days seen the whole fat ox roasting and grilling on a huge spit before a coal fire. All the ways into and out of the Römer were barricaded off and guarded. The big square was gradually filling up, and the swaying and pushing became fiercer as time went by, with the crowd constantly trying to move towards any spot where something new and special seemed to be happening.

In spite of all this, there was comparative silence; and when the tocsin began to ring, the whole crowd seemed to be struck with awe and amazement. What first attracted the attention of everybody who had a view of the square from above was the procession of the nobles of Aix-la-Chapelle and Nuremberg bearing the crown jewels to the cathedral. These, being palladia, had the place of honour in the carriage, and the deputies sat opposite them on the back seat, as respect

\* The City Council House.

demanded. Now the three Prince-Electors entered the cathedral. After the insignia were handed over to the Elector of Mainz, the crown and sword were at once taken to the Emperor's quarters. Meanwhile, as we knew, the chief personages and the spectators in the cathedral were occupied with further preparations and rites.

But other things were happening before our eyes. The ambassadors drove up to the Romer, out of which the canopy, carried by non-commissioned officers, was taken to the Emperor's quarters. The Hereditary Marshal Count von Pappenheim immediately mounted his horse. He was a slim, very handsome man, who looked extremely well in the Spanish costume, with the richly embroidered doublet, gold cloak, high plumed hat, and his hair flowing loose. When he moved off, to the chiming of all the bells, the other ambassadors followed him on horseback towards the Emperor's quarters, all even more magnificent than on the Election Day. We wished it were possible to be there as well; in fact, all that day we went on wishing that we could split ourselves up and be in several places at once. In the meantime, we told each other what would be happening there. Now the Emperor would be putting on his hereditary robes, new ones copied from the old Carolingian robes. The hereditary officers received the imperial insignia and mounted their horses with them. The Emperor in his robes and the King of Rome in his Spanish dress both mounted too, and even as they did so, the seemingly endless procession pacing ahead of them heralded their approach to the square.

Our eyes were already dazzled by the multitudinous variety of richly-dressed attendants and officials, as well as the stately nobles, passing by; and then it all became almost too overwhelming to look at, as the electoral envoys and the hereditary officers came, and finally, under the canopy carried by twelve magistrates and counsellors, the Emperor himself, a legendary figure in his robes, and on his left, slightly behind him, and in Spanish costume, his son, both slowly riding by on superbly caparisoned horses. We longed for a magic spell to bring this

moving vision to a standstill, if only for a moment; but the splendour of it swept on like a flowing stream, the empty space behind instantly filled up by the crowd, which poured in like the waves of the sea.

Then the crowd began to push in a new direction; for another passage had to be opened up from the Market to the Römer doors and a wooden gangway made for the procession when it returned from the cathedral.

Later on we listened eagerly to accounts of what happened in the cathedral—the long drawn-out ceremonies leading up to and accompanying the anointing, crowning and conferring of knighthood. We heard about all this from people who had gone there, giving up their chance of seeing so many other things.

In the meantime, we ate our picnic lunch; for on the most festive of all days that we had known we had to make do with cold food. To make up for that, the best and oldest wines had been brought up from everyone's family cellars, so that there was at least one way in which we celebrated these ancient solemnities in ancient style.

The chief sight in the square was now the finished gangway, covered with orange and white cloth. Having gazed in admiration at the Emperor in his carriage and then on horseback, we were now to see him coming on foot. And, strangely enough, it was this last to which we looked forward most, feeling that he would be both at his most natural and at his most dignified when walking.

Older people, who had been present at the coronation of Francis I, told us how Maria Theresa, that incomparably beautiful woman, had watched the solemnities from a balcony window in the Frauenstein house, close to the Römer. When her husband came back from the cathedral in his strange robes, looking almost like Charlemagne risen from the dead, half jokingly he had raised both hands towards her, holding out to her the imperial orb, sceptre and quaint gloves. She had burst into peals of laughter. The crowd had been extremely moved and delighted by this privileged glimpse of

the good, natural relations between the most exalted husband and wife in Christendom. And then when the Empress had waved her handkerchief to her consort and even given a ringing cry of "Long live the Emperor!" the people's enthusiasm and joy had known no bounds and it had seemed as if the cheering would never end.

Now the sound of chiming bells and the appearance of the first people in a long procession, smoothly pacing over the brightly-striped gangway, announced that the ceremony was over. We all watched more closely than ever, and now it was easier to get a good view of the procession, especially for us, as it was coming straight towards us. We looked almost straight down on it and the crowded square, as though from the air. Only at the end the magnificence of it was almost too much; for the ambassadors, the hereditary officers, the Emperor and the King under the gold-embroidered canopy, the three Electors Spiritual following, and then the black-clad magistrates and counsellors, all seemed to melt into one mass, moved by a single will, brilliantly harmonious, coming now, to the chime of bells, straight from the cathedral and pacing towards us like some radiant holy vision.

There is infinite magic in ceremonies of mingled religious and political significance. With our eyes we see the secular majesty surrounded by all the symbols of its might, and as it bows before the heavenly majesty we are reminded of the bond between the two. For every individual can manifest his relationship with God only by kneeling down and worshipping.

Now shouts echoing from the market-place began to be taken up in the big square, and a wild cheer broke from thousands upon thousands of throats—giving vent to the fullness of so many hearts. For this great festival was meant as the pledge of a lasting peace, which was in fact to be a blessing to Germany for long years to come.

Some days earlier it had been announced by public proclamation that neither the gangway nor the eagle over the fountain was to be touched by the people. This was done in

order to prevent the kind of accident almost inevitable during such crushes. However, so that some sacrifice, as it were, should be made to the spirit of the populace, some men were sent along after the procession to remove the cloth from the gangway; they wrapped it up in lengths and then threw it into the air. What happened then was not so much an accident as a ridiculous rough-and-tumble; for the cloth unrolled in the air and spread out, as it fell, over a fair number of people. Those who seized hold of the ends and pulled dragged all the people in the middle down to the ground, smothering them in the folds until the frightened victims succeeded in tearing or cutting their way out, whereby each secured for himself a scrap of this material, sanctified by Their Majesties' footsteps.

I did not wait to see much of this uncouth merriment, but hurried down from my lofty standpoint, along all kinds of little staircases and passages, to the great Romer stairs, where the noble and illustrious throng, until now only seen from a distance, was to ascend. There was not much of a crowd here, for the entrances to the building were well guarded, and I was lucky enough to make my way right to the iron balustrade. Here the chief protagonists climbed the stairs past me, while the suite remained behind in the vaulted passages, and I was able to see them from all sides on the three flights of stairs and finally from quite close.

And then at last Their Majesties approached. Father and son were dressed like the Menaechmi.\* The Emperor's hereditary robes of scarlet silk, richly adorned with pearls and gems, and his crown, sceptre and imperial orb, were what struck the eye most; for it was all new, in perfect imitation of the ancient originals. He moved at ease in these robes, and his frank and dignified face was that of an Emperor and a father. The young King, on the other hand, shuffled awkwardly in his monstrous garments, loaded with Charlemagne's jewels, as though in a disguise, and when from time to time

\* I.e., exactly alike. The reference is to a play by Plautus, on which Shakespeare modelled his *Comedy of Errors*.



he glanced at his father, he could not refrain from smiling. In spite of having been heavily padded, the crown stood out from his head like an overhanging roof. The dalmatic and the stole, though fitted and taken in as much as possible, still did not make him show to advantage. The sceptre and orb aroused admiration; but it could not be denied that one would rather have seen these splendid robes worn by someone tall and broad enough to wear them to advantage.

The moment the doors of the great hall were closed again behind these figures, I hurried back to my previous place, which I had some difficulty in recovering, as it had been taken by other people in the meantime.

I got back to my window just in time, for the most interesting and remarkable part of the public events was about to begin. The whole crowd had turned towards the Romer and a repeated shouting of "Long live the Emperor!" told us that the Emperor and the King had appeared at the balcony window of the great hall, to show themselves to the people in their robes. But they did not appear merely in order to provide a show, but also to watch another and even stranger show that was to take place in the square. Before all eyes the handsome, slim Hereditary Marshal swung himself into the saddle; he had laid aside his sword and now in his right hand held a silver tankard with handles and in his left a small tin trowel. Thus he rode along inside the barriers up to the big heap of oats, and then, riding straight into it, he filled his tankard to the brim, levelled it off and carried it back, all with great dignity. The meaning of this ceremony was that the imperial stables were now provided for. The Hereditary Chamberlain then also rode to the same spot and came back with a hand-basin, a water-can and a towel. But what was more entertaining for the onlookers was the Hereditary Lord High Steward, who went to fetch a slice of the roasted ox. He too rode through the barriers, carrying a silver plate up to the large cookhouse, and soon came out again with the covered dish and made his way back to the Romer. Now it was the turn of the Hereditary Cup-Bearer, who rode to the

fountain and fetched wine. In this symbolic way the imperial table was catered for, and all eyes turned to the Hereditary Treasurer, who was to scatter the money. He too mounted a horse, which instead of the pistol-holsters had a pair of beautiful bags, embroidered with the Palatine arms, slung one on each side of the saddle. The moment he had set his horse trotting forward, he dipped into these bags and scattered gold and silver coins plentifully to right and left, so that they came down in a gaily glittering shower of metal. Instantly, thousands of hands stretched out into the air to catch the largesse; but no sooner had the coins fallen than the crowds scrambled on the ground, valiantly fighting for whatever might have fallen near them. And as this movement among the crowd went on continuously as the Treasurer rode forward, it was a very amusing sight for the onlookers. The struggling became most intense at the end, when he flung out the bags themselves and everyone tried his hardest to seize this booty, which was the most valuable of all.

When Their Majesties had withdrawn from the balcony there was another sacrifice to be made to the mob, which in such cases prefers to seize the gifts by force rather than wait patiently and receive them gratefully. In coarser and cruder times it was the custom to surrender the oats to the crowd immediately the Marshal had taken his share, and likewise the fountain and the cookhouse after the cup-bearer and the steward had performed their duties. But this time, discipline and order were maintained as far as possible, in order to prevent accidents. Nevertheless, the same old malicious practical jokes came into their own, as for instance when one man had loaded himself up with a sack of oats, and someone else cut a hole in it, and similar signs of sociability. Around the roasted ox, however, a more serious battle was fought, as was always the case. In this fight it was numbers that counted. Two guilds, the butchers and the vintners, had in the traditional manner posted themselves in such positions that this enormous roast must inevitably fall to one of them. The butchers thought that they had most right to an ox which they

themselves had delivered to the cookhouse in one piece; the vintners, on the other hand, based their claim on the fact that the cookhouse was built near their traditional meeting-place and that they had won the last time, as everyone could see from the horns of that captured ox, a triumphal trophy protruding from the barred gable-window of their guild-house. Both guilds had many members, some of them very strong men, handy with their fists. But I have forgotten which of them carried off the victory on this occasion.

Then, as apparently all such festivities must end up with something dangerous and frightening, there came a dreadful moment when the wooden cookhouse itself was surrendered to the crowd. The roof was instantly swarming with people, though it was impossible to see how they got up there. The planks were torn loose and pitched down, so that particularly from a distance it seemed as if everyone of them must kill several of the crowd surging around below. The roof was off in a flash, and here and there individuals were clutching at planks and beams, trying to wrench them out of their joints; some even were still swaying about on top after the posts had been sawn through below and the whole framework was swinging to and fro, threatening to collapse at any moment. Nervous people averted their eyes, everyone expecting a shocking accident. However, we did not hear afterwards of anyone being injured, and, rough and violent though it had all been, it seemed to have passed off all right.

Everyone knew that now the Emperor and the King would return from the private room to which they had retired from the balcony and would banquet in the great hall of the Römer. We had been permitted to admire the arrangements for this banquet the previous day, and I was longing to get a glimpse inside, if possible. So I made my way, as I had done before, down to the great staircase, which is directly facing the door of the hall. Here I gazed awe-struck at the men of high rank who today acknowledged their functions as liegemen of the supreme head of the Empire. Forty-four counts, carrying the dishes from the kitchen, went past me in procession, all mag-

nificently dressed, so that the contrast between their ceremonial dignity and what they were doing was bewildering for the boy watching them. The crowd, though not large, seemed more than it was in this small space. The door to the hall was guarded, but those authorised were continually passing in and out. I caught sight of one of the Palatine house-stewards and asked him if he could not let me slip in. He did not hesitate for long, but gave me one of the silver dishes that he was carrying—a thing he could do all the more confidently as I was well dressed. And so I penetrated into the holy of holies. The Palatine table was on the left, close to the door, and a few steps brought me on to the platform where it stood, behind the barriers.

At the other end of the hall, directly under the windows, on raised seats and under canopies, sat the Emperor and the King in their robes; but their crowns and sceptres lay on golden cushions some distance behind them. The three Electors Spiritual were seated on separate daises, their side-boards behind them; Mainz facing Their Majesties, Trier on their right, and Cologne on their left. This upper end of the hall made an impressive and delightful picture, and provoked the thought that the clergy like to remain on good terms with the Sovereign as long as possible. In contrast to this the magnificently decorated tables of all the temporal Electors, unoccupied and desolate, were a reminder of the unfortunate relations prevailing for centuries between them and the supreme head of the Empire. The ambassadors of those princes had already withdrawn to dine in an ante-room; and if as a result most of the hall had a rather spectral appearance, with so many invisible guests being waited on in very splendid style, yet the most depressing was a large unoccupied table in the centre; for here, too, all the places were empty, because all those who had the right to sit there had absented themselves—and many even left the city—for face-saving reasons, lest any slur should be cast upon their honour on this memorable day.

I was too young to understand all the implications of this

scene and was bewildered by the bustle around me. I did my best to take it all in. When the dessert was carried in and the ambassadors returned to declare their allegiance, I slipped out again and went to get a good meal at the house of close friends who lived nearby, which set me up again after the day's semi-fasting and made me fit for the fireworks display to take place that evening

I intended to celebrate this glorious evening in a festive spirit: I had agreed with Gretchen, Pylades and his sweetheart, that we would meet somewhere at nightfall. Lights were already going up all over the town when I met them. I gave Gretchen my arm and we strolled from one part of the town to another and were very happy together. The cousins were with us at first but soon disappeared in the crowd. Outside some of the ambassadors' houses, where splendid illuminations had been affixed (the Palatine ambassador's house being the most magnificent of all), it was as bright as broad daylight. In order not to be recognised, I had disguised myself to some extent, and Gretchen thought it quite suited me. We admired the various glittering shows and the fairylike palaces of flame with which all the ambassadors were trying to outshine each other. But Prince Esterhazy's exhibition surpassed them all. Our little party was enchanted with it and the ingenuity of it all, and we were just beginning to enjoy the details when Gretchen's cousins came up again and told us there were brilliant illuminations on the Brandenburg ambassador's house. We did not in the least mind the long walk from the Rossmarkt to the Saalhof; but when we got there we found we had been completely fooled. Seen from the side facing the Main, the Saalhof is a symmetrical and stately building, but seen from the town side it is ancient, irregular and unimpressive. A chaotic façade, which nobody ever looks at, is dotted with small windows, all of different shapes and sizes, at various heights and at various distances from each other, irregularly placed gates and doors, and a basement most of which is transformed into little shops. Here the random, broken and unconnected

lines of the building had been followed, and every window, every door, every kind of opening had been outlined with lamps, in a manner that would look well on a well-designed house. But the brilliant illumination of this worst and most misshapen of all façades was preposterous. Although it was amusing, rather as a clown's fooleries are, there was something rather objectionable about it, too, for one could not fail to see the intention behind it—in the same way that had been apparent and commented on in all the public behaviour of the otherwise highly esteemed Plotho.\* And although he was very popular and admired for the humour with which he, just like his King, would override all pomp and ceremony, we preferred to return to Prince Esterhazy's fair realm.

In honour of the day this eminent ambassador had ignored his unfavourably situated residence and instead had the broad esplanade of lime trees in the Rossmarkt decorated with many-coloured illuminations in the shape of an arch, with an even more superb vista seen through it. The whole enclosure was framed in lamps. Between the trees stood pyramids and globes of light on translucent pedestals; between one tree and the next hung brilliant garlands, from which lanterns dangled. In various places, bread and sausages were distributed among the common people, and there was no lack of wine.

Here the four of us walked up and down together, arm in arm, and with Gretchen by my side I felt as if I were strolling in those happy Elysian fields where one breaks the crystal vessels from the trees, to find them immediately filled with the wine wished for, and shakes down the fruit that changes into any dish one desires. Indeed, after a time we began to feel such cravings and, led by Pylades, we made our way to a very comfortable eating-house. And as there was nobody else there, since everybody was out in the streets, we made ourselves all the more at home and spent the best part of the night in the happiest and gayest manner, in an atmosphere of devoted friendship and love. When I had escorted Gretchen

\* Baron von Plotho, the Brandenburg ambassador, a man of boorish manners; his party was quartered in the Saalhof

to her door, she kissed me on the forehead. It was the first and last time that she showed me such a sign of affection; for, alas, I never saw her again.

I was still in bed the next morning when my mother entered the room, looking frightened and upset. It was always easy to see when she had something on her mind. "Get up," she said, "and be prepared for something disagreeable. It has come out that you mix in very bad company and have got yourself involved in matters of a most dangerous and disreputable kind. Father is beside himself, and all we could get him to agree to is that he will have the affair looked into by a third person. Stay in your room and wait and see what happens. Counsellor Schneider\* will come to see you; he has been appointed by the authorities and has Father's consent, too. For an action is already being brought and the affair may take a very bad turn."

Although I could see that it was all being taken far more seriously than was called for, I still felt somewhat perturbed, even if nothing more should be discovered than the actual state of things. My old "Messiah"-loving friend at last appeared, with tears in his eyes. Putting his hand on my arm, he said: "I am heartily sorry to have to see you on such business. I would not have thought that you could go so far astray. But this is what comes of bad company and bad examples, and this is how an inexperienced lad can be led step by step into crime."

"I am not aware of having committed any crime," I answered, "nor of having kept bad company."

"This is not the time for you to defend yourself," he interrupted me. "I have come to make an investigation and to get a frank confession from you."

"What do you want to know?" I retorted.

He sat down, took out a sheet of paper and began his questions.

\* A family friend who had smuggled in Klopstock's *Messiah* epic, despite the disapproval of Goethe's father.

"Did you not recommend X to your grandfather as a candidate for a certain post?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Where did you get to know him?"

"On walks."

"And in what company?"

I hesitated, for I did not want to give away my friends.

"This silence will not help you," he went on, "for quite enough is known already."

"What is known already?" I asked.

"It is known that this individual was introduced to you by others of his own sort, namely by . . ." and here he named three people whom I did not know and had never seen, as I immediately told him.

"You mean to say," he went on, "that you don't know these people, although you have met them repeatedly?"

"Not even once," I replied. "As I say, I don't know any of them except X, and I have never met him indoors."

"Have you not often been in —— Strasse?"

"Never," I said. This was not strictly true. I had once gone with Pylades when he went to see his girl, who lived in this street; but we had gone in the back way and remained in the summerhouse. So I thought I could justifiably claim not to have been in the street itself.

The good man asked various other questions, all of which I was able to answer in the negative; for I knew nothing about what he wanted to know. At last he became rather irritable and said: "You repay my trust and goodwill very badly. I came here to save you. You can't deny that you have written letters for these people themselves or for their accomplices, composing essays and so helping them in their evil practices. I have come to save you. For this is a matter of nothing less than forged documents, false wills, fraudulent I.O.U.s, and similar things. I have come not merely as a friend of the family; I also come in the name and by order of the authorities who, in consideration of your family and



your youth, wish to spare you and some other lads who were lured into the trap in the same way."

It particularly struck me that among the people he named, precisely those with whom I used to associate were missing. The circumstances did not coincide, although they came very close to doing so, and I could still hope to save my young friends. However, the worthy man pressed me harder and harder. I could not deny that there were many nights when I had come home late, that I had got hold of a key to the house, and had more than once been seen together with persons of low class and disreputable appearance at various places of public amusement, and that girls were involved, too. To cut a long story short, everything seemed to have been discovered except the names. This encouraged me to persist in my silence.

"Do not let me leave you like this," my old friend said. "The matter is urgent. If I go, someone else will immediately come who will not allow you so much scope. Don't make a bad affair worse by being stubborn."

Now I vividly imagined Gretchen and her cousins; I saw them arrested, cross-examined, sentenced and disgraced, and then, like a flash of lightning, it occurred to me that these young men, though they had been absolutely honourable in their dealings with me, might have become involved in these scandals, particularly the elder, whom I had never really liked and who came home late and hardly ever had anything pleasant to tell us. But I still kept my confession back.

"Personally," I said, "I am not aware of having done anything wrong and am quite at ease on that point. But it is not quite impossible that people with whom I have been going about may have become guilty of a rash or criminal act. Let them be searched for and found, convicted and punished. Up till now I have nothing to reproach myself with, and I don't want to harm people who have been kind and friendly to me."

He would not let me say any more, but exclaimed with some excitement: "Yes, they will be found. There were three

houses where the villains used to meet." He named the streets and the numbers of the houses, and unfortunately the house where I used to go was among them. "The first den has already been cleared out," he continued, "and the same is being done at the other two places at this very moment. Everything will be clear in a few hours. Make a clean breast of it and so avoid a judicial investigation, an appearance in court, and all the other unpleasant things." As the house had been identified, I considered further silence useless. And the innocence of our meetings made me hope that I could be of more use to them by explaining.

"Sit down," I exclaimed, fetching him back from the door. "I want to tell you everything and so take a weight off your mind and my own. There's only one thing I want to ask you: don't have any more doubts about the truth of what I say."

Now I told my friend the whole story, at first talking quietly and calmly. But the more I recalled the people, things and episodes, all those innocent pleasures and happy enjoyments which I was now, so to speak, revealing to a criminal court, the more my distress increased, until finally I burst into tears and gave way to uncontrolled emotion. Our family friend, who hoped that the real mystery might now be on the way to being solved (for he took my grief for a symptom that I was on the point of reluctantly confessing to some monstrous crime), did his best to calm me down; he was very anxious to hear what I had to say. Indeed, he partly succeeded, just enough for me to give the bare outlines of the story. Although he was satisfied as to the innocence of what had been going on, he was still somewhat doubtful and put more questions to me, which only worked me up into a state of grief and fury again. At last I assured him that I had nothing more to say and was well aware that I had nothing to fear; for, I said, "I was innocent, of good family and well connected. But the others might be just as innocent, without having the benefit of being believed or protected by friends. And I declared that if they were not spared like me and their foolishness and their mistakes forgiven, if they were treated at all harshly and

unjustly, I would take my own life, and no one should stop me. On this point, too, my friend tried to calm me down, but I did not trust him, and when finally he left me I was in a desperate state. I reproached myself with having told the whole story and brought everything to light. I foresaw that all our childish actions, juvenile fancies, all our familiarities and little secrets, would be given quite a different interpretation and that I might be involving my good friend Pylades in this trouble, too, and making him very unhappy. All these thoughts came crowding into my excited imagination, sharpening my distress to the point where I did not know what to do for desperation, threw myself flat on the floor and wept bitterly. I don't know how long I had been lying there when my sister came in. She was very frightened to see the state I was in and did everything she could to cheer me up. She told me that an official had been downstairs with father waiting for our family friend to return, and after they had been together for some time behind closed doors, the two gentlemen had gone away, both talking with obvious satisfaction, even with bursts of laughter, and that she had heard the words: "It's all right, the thing is not serious."

"Of course it isn't serious!" I snapped. "Not for me, not for us. I haven't committed any crime, and even if I had, they would find a way of hushing it up. But the others, the others," I exclaimed, "who is going to help them?"

My sister tried to comfort me with a complicated argument about how, if the people of higher rank were to be saved, a veil would also have to be cast over the errors of those of lower standing. It had no effect on me. No sooner had she gone than I abandoned myself to my grief again, summoning up the visions of my love and passion and of all real and possible misfortunes. I built up fantasy upon fantasy, seeing nothing but misery after misery, and revelled in imagining Gretchen and myself in the most awful circumstances.

Our family friend had ordered me to stay in my room and see nobody except members of the family. I had no objection

to this, for I preferred to be alone. My mother and sister came to see me from time to time and did their utmost to comfort me. The next day they even came on behalf of my father, who, now being better informed about the affair, offered me a complete pardon, which I accepted gratefully. But I obstinately refused his offer to take me out with him to see the imperial crown jewels, which were now on public show, and declared that I did not want to have anything more to do with the world or the Holy Roman Empire until I heard how this disagreeable business, which would have no further consequences for me, was going to end for my poor friends. My family knew nothing about this and so left me alone. But during the next few days they made several more attempts to get me out of the house and to make me take an interest in the public festivities. However, it was no use: neither the grand gala day, nor all that went on in connection with the conferring of so many titles, nor the public banquet held by the Emperor and the King, could make me stir out of the house. The Elector Palatine might come to attend on Their Majesties or they in their turn visit the Prince-Electors, the last electoral sitting might be held to deal with outstanding items and to renew the electoral union, but nothing could call me forth from my impassioned solitude. I let the bells go on ringing on the thanksgiving day, the Emperor go to the Capuchin church, and the Electors and the Emperor depart, all without stirring a step outside my room. The last salvo of cannon, tremendous though it was, did not arouse me, and when the smoke of the explosions had vanished and the last echo died away, all these glories had passed away from my soul, too.

The only satisfaction I had was in ruminating over my misery and in multiplying it a thousandfold in my imagination. All my inventiveness, all my talent for poetry and eloquence, had concentrated on this sick element in myself, and by their very vitality they were threatening to bring an incurable disease on body and soul. In this wretched state nothing seemed to be worth while, nothing now seemed to be

desirable. I did sometimes feel an infinite longing to know how things were going with my poor friends and the girl I loved, and what had been the result of the more detailed investigation, to what extent they were involved in those crimes, or whether they had been found innocent. But even this I pictured in all kinds of ways and in the darkest colours, and made a point of imagining them innocent and thoroughly unfortunate. At times I wanted to shake off this uncertainty and wrote violently threatening letters to our family friend, telling him not to withhold the further course of events from me. But then I tore them up again, suddenly afraid of being definitely informed how great my misery was and of having to renounce the imaginary comfort which had borne me up through these times of torment.

So I spent days and nights in restless misery, sometimes raving and then again exhausted, so that in the end I was glad when a fairly serious physical illness came upon me, the doctor had to be called in and everyone had to think about every possible way of soothing me. They thought they could do this in a general way by solemnly assuring me that all who had been more or less implicated in this affair had been treated with the utmost lenience, that my own friends had been found practically innocent and released with a slight reprimand, and that Gretchen had left the town and returned to her home. They hesitated before giving me this last piece of news, and indeed I took it hard; for I could not imagine that she had gone of her own accord, but assumed it to be banishment in disgrace. This did not improve my physical and mental condition; my distress began again with all the greater intensity and I had time enough to torture myself with visions of the most wildly romantic kind of melancholy happenings and an inevitable tragic catastrophe.

*[After this disillusionment, which soon affected his memories of Gretchen, Goethe was quite glad to be sent in the next year (1765) to the University of Leipzig.]*

## LEIPZIG SOCIETY

**W**HEN I arrived in Leipzig, it was just the time of the Fair. This was a special pleasure for me, for it evoked memories of something I had known at home: familiar wares and familiar people selling them, only in different places and under different conditions. I strolled through the market and past the booths with much interest; but what attracted me most was those inhabitants of Eastern Europe, the Poles and Russians, in their strange costumes, and most of all the Greeks, for the sake of whose handsome figures and dignified clothes I paid many visits there.

However, this lively bustle was soon over, and now I began to see the city itself, with its beautiful, tall buildings, all in harmony with each other. I was very much struck with it; indeed, there is something monumental about this city, particularly noticeable in the tranquillity of Sundays and holidays, or in the moonlight, when the streets with their patches of light and shadow often lured me out for nightly strolls.

However, I did not much care for this new environment, compared to what I had been used to at home. Leipzig has no atmosphere of the past; its monuments belong to a quite recent epoch, bearing witness to commercial enterprise, wealth and luxury. What did appeal to me, however, was the buildings—which seemed to me so very huge—facing on to two streets and enclosing a whole urban world in their vast courtyards with the towering walls, like great citadels, almost like towns in themselves. It was in one of these remarkable places that I took lodgings; this was at the Feuerkugel\* between the old and the new Neumarkt.† A couple of pleasant rooms overlooking the courtyard, which was a thoroughfare with a good deal of traffic, were taken by the bookseller Fleischer during the Fair, and I took them on afterwards at a reasonable rent. I found I had a fellow-lodger, a theological

\* The Bomb Tavern.

† New Market.

student, who was a high-minded man, very well read in his subject, but poor and—a thing that made him very worried about the future—suffering from eye trouble. He had brought it on by too much reading, which he was in the habit of continuing until twilight faded into darkness; in fact, even reading by moonlight, in order to save the little oil he had. Our elderly landlady did all she could for him; she was always kind to me, too, and looked after us both very well.

I hurried to take my letter of introduction to Hofrat Böhme, once a pupil of Maschow's and now his successor as Professor of history and constitutional law. A small, thick-set man, full of life, he welcomed me in a friendly way and introduced me to his wife. Both of them, as well as the other people on whom I paid calls, gave me reason to hope that I should get on very well in Leipzig; but for a start I was careful not to let anyone know what I had up my sleeve—namely, that I could scarcely bear to wait for the right moment to turn my back on the law and dedicate myself to the study of the classics. I was cautious enough to wait until the Fleischers had left, so that news of my intentions should not be passed on to my family faster than need be. But then I went off to Hofrat Bohme, whom I considered the person to be confided in first of all, and declared my intentions to him with a good deal of pomposity and mincing no words. But my speech did not by any means meet with a good reception. As an historian and legal scholar he had a thorough loathing of everything that smacked of *belles lettres*. Unfortunately, he was not on very good terms with those who cultivated them, and Gellert\* in particular, in whom I had been tactless enough to express much confidence, was a person he could not endure. Hence, to deprive himself of a faithful pupil, while sending him along to these men, and above all in such circumstances, struck him as quite out of the question. So he gave me a tremendous dressing-down there and then, declaring he could not countenance such a step without my parents' per-

\* Christian Gellert (1715-1769), author of some fables reminiscent of La Fontaine's.

mission, even if he approved of it himself, as in this case he did not. He then launched into passionate denunciations of philology and language studies, but even more of the practice of poetry, in which I had also hinted at having an incidental interest. He wound up by saying that if I wanted to make a closer study of the classics, the best way to do it was by way of jurisprudence. He quoted the case of many jurists who had also been men of wide culture, such as Everhard Otto and Heineccius, promised me all kinds of wonders from ancient Rome and the history of law, and made it clear as daylight to me that I would not even be going a long way round if later on, after giving it more thought and with my parents' agreement, I still wished to follow my plan. He urged me, in a friendly way, to think the matter over again and to come and tell him what I had decided in a few days, because term was just about to begin.

It was really very kind of him not to press me any more at the moment. In any case, his arguments and the force with which he put them forward had already convinced me, young and susceptible as I was, and I began to see the difficulty and questionable nature of what I had privately imagined to be so simple. Soon after that, Frau Hofrat Böhme sent me an invitation. I found her alone. She was no longer young, rather an invalid, and infinitely mild and gentle, a marked contrast to her husband, who was downright boisterous in his jovial moods. She turned the conversation to what I had recently discussed with her husband and put the whole case again, so kindly, sympathetically and sensibly that I could not help giving way; and the few reservations that I insisted on were accepted by them.

The Hofrat then made a list of the lectures I was to attend, which included philosophy, history of law, and several other subjects. I agreed to this; but I managed to get permission to attend Gellert's lectures on the history of literature (using Stockhausen's book), and his classes as well.

The respect and popularity which Gellert enjoyed among all young people was extraordinary. I had already visited



him and been given a kind welcome. He was slight in build, without being gaunt, had mild, rather melancholy eyes, a very fine forehead, a rather hooked nose and a sensitive mouth, in a well-formed oval face; his appearance was altogether attractive. It was not easy to get access to him. His two assistants were like priests guarding a sanctuary to which not everyone was admitted, nor at all times. And doubtless such precautions were necessary, for he would have had to give up his whole day if he had tried to see and satisfy all the people who wanted to get to know him personally.

At first I went to lectures regularly and enthusiastically, but I failed to get any enlightenment from philosophy. In logic it struck me as rather quaint that I was now to pick to pieces, isolate and, as it were, undo all those mental processes which I had been performing with the utmost ease since babyhood, and this in order to understand the proper use of them. It seemed to me that I knew as much about objective reality, the world and God, as the professor did, and that there were a good many snags in the whole system. Yet things went along pretty well until shortly before Shrove Tuesday. But then it happened that in the Thomasplan,\* quite close to where Professor Winckler taught and just at the time of his lecture, the most delicious fritters came hot from the pan, delaying us so long that our notebooks went into a decline and, as spring came nearer, gradually melted with the snow and vanished away.

Things were soon in an equally bad way with my law lectures; for I already knew exactly as much as the professor thought good to teach us. At first I took notes with the most dogged persistence; but my energy was gradually paralysed, as I found it extremely boring to make the same notes all over again of what I had gone through so often with my father, in question-and-answer exercises, that I had memorised it thoroughly. The harm caused by taking young people too far on in many subjects at school became still more obvious later on; time and attention had been diverted from linguistic

\* St. Thomas's Churchyard.

exercises and a grounding in the real elements, and devoted instead to so-called practical subjects, which make for less rather than more intellectual discipline, unless they are taught methodically and thoroughly.

In passing, I want to mention yet another evil with which students have to contend. University teachers, just like men in other positions, cannot all be of the same age; but since the younger ones are really only teaching in order to learn, and, if they are at all brilliant, are even ahead of their time, they acquire their own learning very much at the expense of their students, who are not being taught what they really need, but what the teacher wants to work over for his own purposes. On the other hand, many of the oldest professors have long come to a dead stop; they merely hand down fossilised views and, when it comes to details, much that time has already proved to be pointless and wrong. Between the two a deplorable conflict arises, which pulls young minds this way and that and can hardly be counterbalanced by the middle-aged professors who, although they have acquired their erudition and culture, at the same time have not lost their intellectual curiosity and breadth of interest.

Now, while I was learning far more than I could digest and so was beginning to feel increasing mental discomfort, in my social life, too, I had a number of trivial but tiresome experiences to go through, as one generally does when changing one's environment and entering on a new course of life. The first thing for which my women friends took me to task was my style of dress. In this respect I had left home for the university rather oddly equipped.

My father, who disliked nothing more than seeing people wasting their time or not making full use of their energies, carried his taste for thrift to such a point that he enjoyed nothing more than killing two birds with one stone. In pursuit of this policy, he never employed a servant who could not do some extra job in the house. Now, as he had always done all his writing himself, except that latterly he had had the convenience of being able to dictate to the young man in the

house, he found it most useful to have servants who were tailors; and they had to make good use of their time, not only making their own liveries but also all the clothes for my father and us children, besides doing all the mending. My father himself saw to it that we had the best cloth, buying stuff of fine quality from the foreign merchants at the fairs and keeping it in store. I distinctly remember, for instance, how he always used to visit the von Löwenichs from Aix-la-Chapelle and had introduced me, even as a little boy, to these and other prominent merchants.

We had the best material and a great variety of it, including wool, serge, and Gottingen cloth, as well as linings, so that as far as the stuff itself was concerned we had no need to be ashamed of our appearance. But as a rule everything was ruined by the cut. For although these household tailors of ours might have been sufficiently good journeymen to make up and finish a coat cut out by a master-tailor, they had been faced with the problem of doing the cutting-out as well, which was not always very successful. To make matters worse, my father looked after his own clothes very carefully and kept them well, in fact kept them for many years, more in the cupboard than worn; as a result he had a weakness for certain old-fashioned styles of cut and trimming, which often meant that we were rather queerly got-up.

It was by this system too that an outfit had been provided for me when I went to the university. It was very complete and respectable, even including a laced suit; and being used to this style of things, I considered myself quite well dressed. However, it was not long before my women friends began to convince me, first by gentle teasing and then by reasoned argument, that I looked as though I had dropped from another planet. Annoying though this was, I could not see at first what I was to do about it. But when Herr von Masuren, the poetical country gentleman so popular then, once appeared on the stage in similar garb and was heartily laughed at, more for his outer than for his inner absurdity, I screwed up my courage and took the plunge, exchanging my

entire wardrobe for a modern and fashionable one, whereby, certainly, its dimensions shrank.

After this ordeal was passed, however, there came another that was far more tiresome because the thing involved could not be cast aside and exchanged as easily as clothes.

It was like this: I had been born and bred in a part of the country where the Upper German dialect was spoken, and although my father always insisted on a certain purity of speech and had from our earliest childhood drawn our attention to what can really be called the defects of that dialect, I had nevertheless kept certain more fundamental peculiarities and was inclined to air them because I liked their freshness and simplicity. It was for this that I was now severely criticised by my new fellow-townsmen. An Upper German, and perhaps especially one who lives by the Rhine and the Main (for great rivers, like the sea-coast, always have a stimulating influence) makes great play with similes and allusions and, with all his sturdy common sense, likes to use proverbial expressions. In both cases he is often crude, although, as one realises when one sees the intention, always to the point: only it must be admitted that occasionally something slips out that is offensive to a sensitive ear.

Every province loves its own dialect; for this is actually the element in which the spirit lives and breathes. But everyone knows how persistently the Meissen dialect has tried to dominate the other German dialects, even temporarily overwhelming them. We have suffered under this pedantic despotism for many years, and it is only by constant resistance that the other provinces have managed to restore their old rights. What a high-spirited young man had to put up with under this perpetual schoolmasterly criticism can easily be imagined by anyone who reflects that it was not only my local pronunciation which I was expected to sacrifice—a change to which one could doubtless become reconciled—but with it a particular way of thinking, imagination and feeling characteristic of my own part of the country. And this intolerable demand was made by cultivated men and women, whose convictions

I could not adopt and whom I obscurely felt to be wrong, without being quite able to explain it to myself. I was expected to drop using pithy Bible quotations and good old expressions from the Chronicles. I was supposed to forget that I had ever read Geiler von Kaisersberg and to give up the use of proverbs, which after all often hit the nail on the head instead of beating round the bush. All this, which I had made my own with all the enthusiasm of youth, I was expected to give up; I felt paralysed to the core of my being; I became almost incapable of expressing myself on the most commonplace subjects. Besides this, I was told that one should speak as one writes and write as one speaks; but for me the spoken and the written language were once and for all two different things, each existing in its own right. And incidentally, by no means everything I heard in the Meissen dialect would have looked so very grand on paper.

Anyone reading here how a young student was influenced by men and women of culture, the learned, and others who moved in good society, would be able to guess that this was Leipzig, even if the fact had not been mentioned. Each of the German universities has its own peculiar character; for as no homogeneous form of education can spread all through our country, every locality insists on doing things its own way and develops its particular idiosyncrasies to the furthest extreme; and this is especially true of the universities. Jena and Halle had sunk to the depths of barbarism, physical strength and skill in fencing being what counted most and everybody taking the law into his own hands in the wildest manner; and such a state of things can only be perpetuated together with a tradition of guzzling and swilling. The relationship between the students and the townsfolk, though varying slightly from place to place, had one constant element; the reckless intruder had no respect for the citizen and considered himself a peculiar species of being, privileged to take all kinds of impudent liberties. In Leipzig, on the other hand, a student could hardly be anything but urbane

if he wanted to have any intercourse with its rich, well-bred and cultivated citizens.

All refinement of manners must indeed appear narrow, stilted and even from some points of view ludicrous, if it is not the product of a life lived in a grand style; and those wild huntsmen from the banks of the Saale\* thought themselves vastly superior to the tame shepherds by the Pleisse.\* Zacharia's *Renommist* ('The Braggart') will always remain a valuable document for its vivid picture of the life and manners of that period; and indeed all his poems must be very interesting to anyone who wants to get an idea of the social life and atmosphere of the time which, although it certainly was weak, did have the charm of childlike innocence.

\*            \*            \*

At first I found nothing disagreeable in this style of life. My letters of introduction had brought me into the houses of good families, and in this way I came into various circles where I was well received. But I soon could not help realising that Leipzig society found a great many faults with me and, after I had taken to dressing according to their taste, also expected me to adopt their way of talking: and it was also quite obvious to me that in exchange for these concessions I was getting little of what I had looked forward to from academic life in the way of learning and the development of my mind; so I soon began to slacken and neglect the social obligations of paying visits and otherwise dancing attendance. In fact, I would have broken off all such relations even earlier had it not been for my deference and respect for Hofrat Böhme and my trustful affection for his wife. The Hofrat unfortunately lacked the happy knack of getting on with young men, of winning their confidence and guiding them as he wished in all circumstances. I never felt the better for having visited him. His wife, on the other hand, took a real interest in me. Her ill-health kept her permanently at home. She often asked me to spend an evening with her

\* On which stand Halle and Leipzig respectively

and had a way of leading me along and improving many small points in my manners; for though I had been well brought up, I still needed *savoir-vivre*. There was only one lady who spent the evenings with her. But this friend of hers tended to be dictatorial and schoolmarmish, for which reason I thoroughly disliked her; and for the sake of defying her I often reverted to those uncouth habits which Frau Hofrat Bohme had already made me give up. Still, they were always quite patient with me and taught me to play piquet, ombre and other games of that kind, which is apparently an indispensable accomplishment in good society.

But it was in the matter of taste that Frau Hofrat Bohme had the greatest influence on me—in a rather negative way, I admit, but absolutely in accordance with the critical views of the time. Gottsched's literary outpourings had risen like another flood throughout the German-speaking world, even threatening to rise as high as the tops of the highest mountains. It takes a long time for such a flood to drain away and the mud to dry again; and as every period has its swarm of imitative versifiers, the imitation of these sloppy and platitudinous works produced a vast quantity of balderdash such as we can hardly imagine nowadays. Hence pointing out the badness of the bad was what the critics of those days most enjoyed, and in fact revelled in. Anyone with any common sense at all, a nodding acquaintance with the classics and some slight knowledge of recent literature thought he automatically had standards by which he could judge anything. Frau Hofrat Bohme was a woman of culture, with a natural dislike of anything undistinguished, feeble and banal; besides this, she was the wife of a man who carried on an unceasing feud against poetry and would not even let pass such things as she approved. Now for a time she did listen to me patiently when I took it upon myself to recite the verse or prose of eminent writers who already had a high reputation (I have always been able to memorise anything that at all appealed to me), but she was not indulgent for long. The first work which she gave a very thorough trouncing was the

*Poeten nach der Mode* ('Fashionable Poets') of Weisse, which had just been very successfully performed several times and had quite delighted me. Actually, when I consider the whole thing more carefully, I had to agree that she was right. Occasionally I had also gone to the length of reciting some of my own poems to her, though without telling her whose they were; and they came off no better than the other fellows'. And so before long I saw the beautiful, bright meadows on the slope of the German Parnassus, where I so loved to roam at will, mercilessly mown, and was even compelled to join in and toss the hay myself and jeer at things which had been a source of lively pleasure to me only a short time earlier and which I now had to regard as 'dead.'

Her coaching of me was helped, though he did not know it, by Professor Morus, an unusually gentle, kindly man whom I had met dining at Hofrat Ludwig's and who received me in a very friendly way when I asked if I might visit him. While I was raising various questions about the classics, I made no secret of what I liked best among modern writers. He then talked about these things, more calmly than Frau Hofrat Böhme but, what was worse, putting the case much better. At first I was upset, then gradually more and more amazed, and finally realised that this eye-opener had done me a great deal of good.

Besides this there were the jeremiads with which Gellert used to warn us against poetry, at his classes. He wanted only prose compositions and always went through these first. Verse he regarded merely as a miserable sort of makeweight. And the worst of it was that even my prose found little favour in his eyes; for I was still following my old habit of basing my work on a little romance, which I liked working out in the form of letters. The subjects were passionate, the style overstepped the limits of ordinary prose, and the contents did not, perhaps, always say much for the author's profound knowledge of human nature. As a result, I could hardly be said to stand in the professor's good books, although he went through my compositions as carefully as anyone else's,



correcting them with red ink, and here and there making some moralising remark in the margin. Several of these exercises I kept for a long time, for my own amusement; but now unfortunately, with the passing of the years, they have disappeared from among my papers.

If older people want to improve a young man's taste, they should not damn or disparage things that he enjoys, no matter what sort of thing it may be, unless they can give him something else instead to occupy his mind. Everyone inveighed against my tastes and inclinations. But what was glorified as an alternative was either so remote that I could not recognise its good qualities or so close that I simply did not think it any better than what was frowned on. In one way and another, I became utterly bewildered. I had hoped great things from a lecture of Ernesti's on Cicero's *De Oratore*; in fact I did learn something from this lecture, but I got no light on what I really wanted to know. What I wanted was a critical standard, and I was beginning to think that nobody had such a thing; for nobody agreed with anyone else, even when they both produced examples. And how were we to discriminate when so much fault was found with the delightful works of a man like Wieland, whose writing appealed so overwhelmingly to us young men?

It was in such a state of mental and emotional disruption, even disintegration (which was also having its effect on my studies), that I used to dine at Hofrat Ludwig's every day. He was a physician and a botanist, and apart from Morus the company consisted entirely of medical students at various stages in their course. On these occasions, naturally, all the talk I heard was about medicine or natural history, and my imagination was drawn away into quite a different field. I heard the name of Haller, Linnæus and Buffon uttered with great veneration; and even though there were occasional arguments about erroneous views that they were supposed to have held, everything was always smoothed out again in the acknowledgment of their greatness. These discussions were on such important subjects, and so interesting, that I was all

agog. Gradually, I became familiar with a great deal of terminology, which I was all the more eager to memorise because I was now afraid to write a single rhyme, however spontaneously it popped into my head, or to read a poem for fear of first liking it and then having to decide it was bad, as had been the case so often already.

This uncertainty in matters of taste and judgment worried me more every day, until in the end I was in despair. I had brought along what I thought the best of my schoolboy writings, partly because I did really hope I might get some credit for them, partly to be able to judge better of the progress I was making. But I found myself in the dilemma of someone who is expected to change his whole outlook and renounce everything he has previously loved and admired. After some time, however, after many inward struggles, I developed such immense contempt for my finished and unfinished work that one day I burnt the lot in the kitchen stove—poetry and prose, drafts, notes and sketches—filling the whole house with clouds of smoke and putting our good-hearted old landlady into quite a dreadful state of fright.

*[After three years in Leipzig, during which much of his attention was given to drawing and etching, Goethe's studies were cut short by a severe illness. His student years produced two short comedies in the French style, a considerable broadening of his intellectual interests, and another unfortunate love affair. In 1768 he returned home to recuperate.]*

## FRANKFURT, PIETISM AND ALCHEMY

THE nearer I came to my native city, the more perturbed I began to feel, remembering the circumstances, prospects and hopes in which I had left home; and I felt very depressed at the thought that I was now returning like a shipwrecked sailor. But as I had not much to reproach myself with, I gradually calmed down. The welcome I was given was not without emotion, and my own natural intense impulsiveness, heightened and stimulated by illness, caused an impassioned scene. Perhaps I looked worse than I felt; it was a long time since I had looked in a mirror and, besides, one is so much used to one's own face. The long and the short of it was a tacit agreement that various pieces of news should only be exchanged gradually and the main thing was that I should have a rest, bodily and mentally.

My sister at once became my companion again and I now learnt more precise details than I had gathered from her letters of how the family had been getting on. After my departure my sister had had to bear the whole brunt of my father's educational hobby. In a house that was completely self-contained and safe now that peace had come, with all lodgers cleared out, she was utterly cut off from any chance of seeing people and enjoying herself outside. She was kept working at French, Italian and English in turn, and my father compelled her to spend a large part of the day practising the piano. She was not allowed to neglect her writing either. Indeed, I had often noticed that my father superintended her correspondence with me and passed his advice on to me through her pen. My sister was, and always remained, an enigmatic being, the strangest mixture of severity and gentleness, obstinacy and submissiveness, qualities that sometimes worked in combination and sometimes singly, according to her moods. Now she had turned all the hard side of her character against our father, in a way that shocked me; she

could not forgive him for having frustrated or embittered many an innocent pleasure in all these three years, and she could not bring herself to see anything at all of his excellent qualities. She did everything he ordered or arranged that she should do, but in the most cold-hearted manner imaginable. She did what was asked, and not a shade more or less; she would not do anything out of affection or helpfulness, and this was one of the first things that my mother bemoaned in a private conversation with me. But as my sister was, after all, as much in need of affection as any other human being, she now gave her devotion entirely to me. She spent all her time looking after me and keeping me amused; she also saw to it that her girl friends, whom she unconsciously tyrannised over, also thought out all kinds of things to keep me in good spirits. She was ingenious in her attempts to cheer me up, and even showed some traces of buffoonish humour which I had never suspected she was capable of and which suited her very well. We soon developed a private language of our own, by means of which we could talk about everybody without their understanding us, and she frequently used this jargon quite brazenly in our parents' presence.

Personally, my father led a rather comfortable life. His health was good, he devoted a large part of the day to my sister's education, continued to write his book of travels, and spent more time in tuning his lute than playing it. He did his best to conceal his resentment at finding, instead of a robust, active son about to take his degree and begin the career for which he was destined, an invalid who seemed to be suffering even more in mind than in body; but he made no secret of his wish to see the cure speeded up as much as possible. Above all, one had to be on one's guard against making any hypochondriac complaints in his presence, for they were apt to make him angry and bitter.

In these circumstances my mother, who was by nature very vivacious and gay, had a very dull time of it. The house-keeping for our small family was soon done. She was a good-hearted woman whose mind was always active and she needed

some emotional interest; the most obvious thing for her was religion, which she took up all the more eagerly since her best friends were cultured women with a fervent belief in God. The most important of them was Fräulein von Klettenberg. It was her conversations and letters that were the source of the 'Confessions of a Noble Mind' in *Wilhelm Meister*. She was slight, of middling height, with a warm, frank manner that was made still more attractive by the graces of good breeding. She dressed very simply, in a way reminiscent of the Moravians. She never lost her cheerfulness and calm and regarded her illness as a necessary element in her transient earthly existence, bearing it with the greatest of patience; at intervals, when she was free from pain she was lively and talkative. Her favourite, perhaps indeed her only subject of conversation, was the moral development which any introspective person can observe in him or herself; and linked with this were the religious ideas in which she saw—in a very attractive, even brilliant way—the unity of the natural and supernatural.

It is hardly necessary to say more in order to recall that detailed Confession, modelled on her spiritual experiences, to those who take an interest in descriptions of that kind. Having had an unusual development since early youth and having been born and brought up in the higher reaches of society, as well as being of a lively and original turn of mind, she did not find much in common with the other women who had taken the same road to salvation. Frau Griesbach, the most excellent woman among them, seemed too austere, too dry, too much of a blue-stocking; she knew and thought more and had a wider grasp of things than the others, who were content with living on their feelings, and hence she was somewhat of a trial to them, because no one else could or would carry along such tremendous intellectual equipment on the path to eternal bliss. On the other hand, however, most of the others became rather monotonous, keeping as they did to a particular terminology, which might well be compared to that of the later "sentimental" school. Fräulein von Kletten-

berg steered a course between both these extremes and seemed to model herself somewhat complacently on the figure of Count Zinzendorf, whose opinions and actions had also borne witness to noble birth and high rank. She now found what she needed in me: a young, impulsive personality, obscurely in quest of grace; someone who, although he could not regard himself as extraordinarily sinful, did not feel quite comfortable about himself and was not in good health either in body or in mind. She was equally delighted with my natural talents and some of my accomplishments. And if she admitted my superiority in many ways, she did not find that at all humiliating; for first of all she had no intention of competing with a man, and secondly she felt sure of being a very long way ahead of me in religious knowledge and experience. My restlessness, my impatience, my striving, searching, exploring, brooding and wavering she interpreted in her own way, not concealing her convictions from me but telling me plainly that it was all because I had not made my peace with God. Now, from my childhood I had believed I was on quite good terms with my God and I went so far as to imagine, on the grounds of various experiences, that He might even be in arrears in His account with me, and I was bold enough to believe that it was I who had to forgive Him on various scores. This arrogant belief was based on my infinite goodwill, which, as it seemed to me, He might have done more to help along. It can easily be imagined how often my friend and I got into arguments on this point, though they were always settled in the most friendly way and sometimes ended up, just like my conversations with the old rector, with the remark that I was a crazy fellow for whom one must make allowances.

I was made pretty miserable by the swelling on my neck, which the physician and surgeon at first wanted to disperse and then, as they said, to bring to a head, and which they finally found it necessary to lance. For quite a time, it is true, I was more in discomfort than in real pain; but towards the end of the treatment the continual dabbing with silver nitrate

and other caustic substances made each new day a thoroughly disagreeable prospect. The doctor and the surgeon also belonged to these religious sectarians. They were, however, extremely different in temperament. The surgeon was a slim, handsome man with a light, deft touch, who unfortunately had a tendency to consumption, but bore his trouble with truly Christian patience and refused to let it interfere with his profession. The physician was an inscrutable man with a wily look in his eye and a friendly way of talking; altogether a cryptic character, who had won a quite unusual degree of confidence among the members of the sect. Being active and observant, he was a comfort to his patients, but what did more than anything else to bring him a large practice was that he had some mysterious medicines which he made up himself and had to keep in the background, not letting people talk about them, because in Frankfurt doctors were strictly forbidden to make up their own prescriptions. There were also certain powders, probably some kind of digestive, of which he did not make such a secret; but the rumour of that all-powerful saline, which was only to be used in the most dangerous cases, circulated among the faithful, although nobody had ever seen it or been treated with it. In order to create and reinforce belief in the possibility of such a panacea, the doctor recommended certain mystical chemico-alchemistic books to those patients whom he thought at all receptive, giving them to understand that by studying these books they might themselves acquire the same precious knowledge. What made this especially important was, he implied, the impossibility of handing the prescription down in the usual way, both for physical and for moral reasons; indeed, what it amounted to was that anyone who wanted to understand, produce and use this wonderful remedy must also understand the way in which nature's secrets interweave, since it was not a specific substance but something greater and of universal quality, which could even manifest itself in various shapes and forms. My friend Fraulein von Klettenberg had paid attention to this fascinating talk. The health of the body was all too closely

bound up with the health of the soul—and was there any greater benefit or greater mercy one could show other people than gaining possession of a remedy that could soothe so much pain and avert so much danger? She had already secretly read Welling's *Opus Magocabbalisticum*; but this author was always so quick to obscure and overshadow the light he threw out that she needed a friend to keep her company in these alternations of light and darkness. It needed very little doing to inoculate me with this mania, too. I got myself the book, which, like all such works, traced its descent directly from the Neo-Platonists. My chief task with it was following up obscure references hinting that what was wrapped in mystery in one place would be cleared up in another; I made very exact notes of all these references, always writing in the margin the number of the page where the explanatory cross-reference was to be found. But even after this, the book remained extremely obscure, even unintelligible; the only thing was that one gradually picked up a terminology which could be used indiscriminately to give the impression that one was at least saying something, even if not understanding much. In this work very respectful reference was made to earlier writers on the same subject, and so we were drawn into investigating these sources for ourselves. We now turned to the works of Theophrastus Paracelsus and Basilius Valentinus, as well as to Helmont, Starkey and others, whose doctrines and rules, all based more or less on nature and imagination, we tried to understand and follow out. I was particularly taken with the *Aurea Catena Homeri*, with its beautiful, though perhaps rather fantastic, picture of the intricate workings of nature. And so, sometimes on our own, sometimes together, we spent a good deal of time on these curiosities and found it a very pleasant way of passing the long winter evenings, when I had to keep to my room, the three of us—for my mother was there as well—getting more enjoyment out of these mysteries than we could have got from a revelation of what they meant.

But there was one very severe ordeal still in store for me.



An upset and at times, it seemed, even ruined digestion produced such symptoms that I began to think none of the treatments tried were any use at all and was terribly afraid that I was going to die. In this last extremity my distraught mother implored the embarrassed doctor to produce his universal remedy and at length forced him to do so. After a long time he hurried home in the middle of the night and returned with a little phial of dry, crystallised salts, which were dissolved in water and swallowed by the patient, who noticed that they had a definitely alkaline taste. No sooner had I taken these salts than I felt a good deal easier; and from that moment onwards my illness took a turn which gradually led to my recovery. I need hardly say how much this intensified our faith in our physician, as well as our own resolution to discover such a treasure for ourselves.

My friend Fraulein von Klettenberg, who was without any near relations, lived alone in a large, pleasantly situated house where she had some time previously begun to equip herself with a small blast-furnace and alembics and retorts of moderate size. Now, following Welling's directions as well as significant hints from our physician and master, she was making experiments, mainly with iron, which was supposed to give off the strongest healing influences if one could only find out how to release them. And as all the books we knew stressed the importance of the volatile salt which had to be used in these experiments, we needed alkalis which, dissolving when exposed to air, were said to unite with those supernatural substances and so finally produce a mysterious and wonderful essence in the form of a neutral salt.

As soon as I was convalescent and the spring weather also was beginning to do me good, I was able to move into my old attic-room. There I, too, set about installing a small laboratory. A little blast-furnace with a sand-bath was fixed up for me and I very quickly learnt how to use a lighted fusee to transform the glass retorts into vessels for evaporating the various mixtures. Now strange ingredients of the macrocosm and the microcosm were treated in weird and mysterious

ways, mainly in the attempt to find some marvellous method of producing neutral salts. What chiefly preoccupied me for quite a long time was the so-called *liquor silicum* (silicic acid) which is produced by melting down pure quartz with the right proportion of alkali; this gives a transparent glass which dissolves on exposure to the air, leaving a beautiful, clear fluid. Anyone who has ever performed this experiment and seen it with his own eyes will hardly blame those who believe in a virgin *materia* and the possibility of acting on and through this to achieve other and greater ends. I became extremely quick and expert in producing silicic acid. The lovely white pebbles that are found in the Main were ideal material for this experiment, and I had everything else I needed, including a capacity for hard work. But I grew tired of it in the end, when I could not help noticing that the product of the quartz was by no means so closely combined with the salt as I had imagined in my philosophisings about it. It very easily separated again, and the most beautiful mineral fluid, which sometimes, to my amazement, seemed to assume the form of a physiological jelly, always deposited a powder which I had to admit was extremely fine quartz dust; it certainly did not show any signs of being organically productive and did not encourage any hopes of seeing the virgin *materia* becoming *mater materia*.

Quaint and scrappy as these experiments were, I did learn various things from them. I was very careful to observe all the processes of crystallisation that occurred and became familiar with the appearance of many natural substances; and as I was well aware that chemistry had become a much more exact science in recent times, I wanted to get a general idea of it, although, half-way to being an adept myself, I had a pretty poor opinion of apothecaries and all those people who experimented with common fire.

[After eighteen months at home, Goethe set out in March, 1770, for Strasbourg to complete his studies and take his degree.]

STRASBOURG MINSTER AND THE  
DANCING-MASTER'S DAUGHTERS

**B**UT now, while I am turning over in my mind what to write about next, by one of those strange tricks that memory plays I find myself thinking of that grand ancient building, the Strasbourg minster, with which I was especially preoccupied in those days. Towering up, it caught the eye from every point in the town and was a landmark that could be seen from out in the country, far and wide.

The more I studied its façade, the surer I became that my first impression was right and that here sublimity and loveliness had merged to form a whole. If we are not to be overpowered by the sheer mass of a huge building and not to be bewildered by its complexity of detail, immensity must combine with grace and beauty, in a way that is unnatural and even, apparently, impossible. The very fact that we cannot formulate our impressions of the minster except in terms of this apparently irreconcilable conflict and its solution is in itself an indication of the building's greatness. I shall try to explain how it comes about that such contradictory elements can so peacefully interpenetrate and form a synthesis.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of spires, let us consider the façade, a tall rectangle mightily rising up before our eyes. If we come up to it in the dusk, or by moonlight, or on a starry night, when the details fade and ultimately disappear, we see nothing but a colossal wall, its height and its breadth in harmonious proportion to each other. If we consider it by daylight, making a mental effort to disregard the details, we realise that this front not only closes up the interior but also blocks out much of what lies alongside it. The openings in this vast plane suggest the demands of the interior, and, bearing this in mind, we can immediately divide it into nine sections. The great main door, opening into the nave, is what first catches the eye. There are two smaller

doors, one on each side of it, leading into the aisles. What meets our eyes over the main entrance is the rose window, designed to cast an awe-inspiring light into the body of the church with all its vaulted arches. In striking contrast to it are the tall slender windows on each side, which clearly belong to the bases of soaring towers. The sub-divisions above them contain three openings, behind which are the bell-cages and similar things. The whole façade is horizontally bounded not by a cornice but by the balustrade of the gallery. These nine sections are reinforced by four buttresses rising from the ground and dividing them into three great perpendicular planes.

Just as there is a beautiful relation between the height and the breadth of this whole façade, so too the buttresses, breaking it up into more slender planes, give it an effect of balanced lightness. But so long as we continue to disregard the details and imagine this mighty wall with no ornamentation except the solid buttresses and such openings as the purpose of the building makes essential, even though we may admit that these main sections are well proportioned, the building as a whole will appear solemn and dignified but also monotonously heavy and plain. For although we understand a work of art as an entity consisting of grand, simple, harmonious parts, and although, seen in this way, it certainly makes a noble and dignified impression, yet the actual pleasure that we get from something which appeals to us comes only from the harmonious development of all its individual elements.

In this respect the Strasbourg minster is extraordinarily satisfying. All the decoration is in perfect harmony with the part which it adorns, subordinated to it as though it had grown out of it. Variety of this kind is always very pleasing when it develops out of the fitness of things, so giving us a feeling of unity. Only when it does so is the result a great work of art.

In such ways a solid wall, an impenetrable block of stone, which was also the basis of two lofty spires, was made to

fulfil two visual functions: to seem self-supporting and self-sufficient and also to seem light and decorative, and, although pierced in innumerable places, it finally succeeded in giving a sense of unshakeable solidity.

This problem is most successfully solved. The openings in the wall, its solid spaces, the buttresses, each of these elements has its own individual character as a result of its particular function. This character spreads gradually over into the subdivisions, so that everything is decorated according to a harmonious pattern; and since everything great or small is in its right place, it is easy to get a general view. This is how a sense of beauty arises out of a sense of immensity. I would remind you of the doors, receding in perspective into the thickness of the wall, with all that infinite ornamentation of their columns and pointed arches, and the window with its ornamental rose that is evolved from its circular shape, the profile of its mullions, and the slim reed-like columns of the perpendicular sub-divisions. Remember the buttresses, rising and receding step by step, carrying little slender, light-pillared, pointed structures tipped with canopies to protect the statues of saints, and all of it streaming heavenward! And remember how every rib and every boss is like a budding blossom, a spray of leaves, or some other natural, growing thing now turned to stone! Look at the building—or at least at pictures of it as a whole and of its parts—compare it with what I say, watch it come alive, and judge if I am right! Some people may think I exaggerate. I admit that though I was enchanted with this building from the first time I saw it, it did take me a long time to realise fully how beautiful it really is.

Having grown up among people who had a poor opinion of the Gothic style of architecture, I had made rather a point of disliking the often overloaded, over-intricate ornamentation that seemed entirely haphazard and only a depressing way of creating a characteristic religious gloom. My aversion had been increased by the fact that I had seen only dull examples of this style, buildings that had neither good proportions nor logical integration. Here, however, it seemed to me, I had

experienced a revelation with none of those defects, but full of undreamed-of beauties.

But the longer I gazed and reflected, the more I seemed to discover even more delightful things. I had already traced out the right proportion of the main sub-divisions and the wealth of ornament, significant down to the tiniest detail. But now I began to recognise the interlocking of these infinitely various ornaments, the transition from one main part to another, the intertwining of similar motifs with their countless variations, from the saint to the gargoyle and from the leaf to the crenellation. The further I explored, the more amazed I became. The more I amused myself and tired myself out with measuring and drawing, the more my affection for the minster grew, so that I spent a great deal of time there, partly studying what existed before my eyes, partly trying to reconstruct in my imagination and on paper what was unfinished or missing, especially the missing spire.

But as I found that this building, standing in an ancient German town, had been built in real old German times, and found too that the master-builder's name, as it was written on his modest tombstone, had a thoroughly German ring, in my enthusiasm for his work of art I went so far as to change the earlier derogatory term "Gothic architecture" for "German architecture," vindicating it as a national style of art. Nor was I shy of making my patriotic views known, at first in conversation, later in a short essay dedicated to the memory of Erwin von Steinbach.\*

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When I think of the fascination that those old buildings had for me and calculate the time I spent on the Strasbourg minster alone, and the care with which I later went round the cathedrals of Cologne and Freiburg, feeling the greatness of these buildings more and more, I am inclined to blame myself for having afterwards lost sight of them entirely, leaving them in the background when I became attracted by

\* The master-builder mentioned above, whose tombstone bears the date 1318

a more highly sophisticated form of art. But when now, in recent years, I see attention turning to those things again, when I see the positively passionate enthusiasm felt for them, talented young men inspired by them to lavish their energy, time, care and money on these memorials of a vanished world, then I am happily reminded that there was some point in what I wanted and endeavoured to achieve in those days. It is a satisfaction to me to see that there is not merely admiration for the achievements of our forefathers, but a general attempt to reconstruct the original intention—at least in pictures—wherever the actual work was never completed in order to make us familiar with the idea behind it. And this, after all, is the alpha and omega of all that man sets out to do. So a serious endeavour is being made to cast light on past ages that must otherwise seem obscure to us; an attempt is being made to bring them to life. In this connection one who deserves especial praise is the valiant Sulpiz Boisserée. He is tirelessly at work on a magnificent series of engravings showing Cologne cathedral as the perfect example of those gigantic inspirations with their whole meaning striving heavenward like the Tower of Babel, so out of proportion to earthly possibilities that the attempt inevitably broke down at some point. If we have been astonished that such buildings are still unfinished, our admiration will be all the greater when we learn what the original plans really were.

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Perhaps I may be allowed to change the subject somewhat abruptly to that of the dance. Just as the minster was always in sight, so the sound of dancing was always in one's ears, every hour of the day, in Strasbourg, indeed in all Alsace. From our early childhood my sister and I had been given dancing lessons by my father himself, which was doubtless rather odd in such a serious man. However, he never let himself be at all flustered as he put us through our paces, drilling us in the various positions and steps with the greatest of precision. And when he had got us to the stage of being able to dance a minuet, he would play us something easy

to follow, in three-four time, on a flageolet, and we bobbed about in time to it to the best of our ability. In the French theatre, too, from an early age I had seen, if not ballet, at least *pas seuls* and *pas de deux* and had made mental notes of all sorts of leaps and peculiar footwork. Then, when we had had enough of the minuet, I would ask my father to play other kinds of dance music, such as the jigs and murkis of which we had so many in our music books, and then I would make up the steps and other movements on the spur of the moment, for my body seemed to have a natural inborn sense of rhythm. This rather tickled my father and sometimes he gave us all a treat by letting us go on dancing, like performing monkeys. After my unfortunate affair with Gretchen, and throughout my stay in Leipzig I never set foot on a ball-room floor. On the contrary, I remember once at a ball being forced to dance a minuet and finding that my limbs seemed to have lost suppleness and sense of rhythm; I would have been utterly shamed and disgraced if most of the onlookers had not maintained that my awkwardness was pure obstinacy, meant to cure young ladies of any desire to make me join in and dance with them against my will.

During my stay in Frankfurt I had been quite cut off from pleasures of this kind, but in Strasbourg the sense of rhythm once more began to wake up in my muscles, just as my general interest in life was returning. On Sundays, as on working-days, there was no pleasure-ground one might stroll past without finding a gay crowd gathered there for the dancing, and generally whirling round in a ring. Private balls were held in the country-houses round about, too, and there was already talk of the dashing fancy dress balls there would be in the coming winter. I realised that I would be out of place and useless in such gatherings; but then a friend of mine, who waltzed very well, advised me to get some practice first in less select circles, so that I could later make a good show in the best society. He took me to a dancing-master who was known to be an expert, and this man promised me that once I had gone over the elementary exercises for a while



and was again sure of them, he would give me more advanced lessons. He was one of those dry, adroit characters so typically French, and he received me in a friendly manner. I paid him for a month in advance and was given twelve tickets, for which he was to give me a certain number of hours. He was strict and precise, but not pedantic; and as I had known something about dancing before, I was soon a credit to him and earned his approval.

There was something which brightened up this man's lessons considerably: he had two pretty daughters not yet twenty. Having been taught dancing since their childhood, they danced very gracefully, and as partners could soon have helped even the clumsiest tyro to make progress. They were both very ladylike and spoke only French. For my part, I pulled myself together, determined not to seem gauche and ridiculous in their eyes. I was lucky enough to be approved of by them too; they were always willing to dance a minuet with me to their father's fiddling and even, what I must confess was not so easy, to initiate me gradually into the whirlings of the waltz. Their father did not seem to have many pupils, and they led a lonely life; so they would sometimes urge me to stay on after the lesson and spend a while chatting with them. I was quite pleased to do this, all the more as I found the younger one very attractive and both of them perfectly proper in their general behaviour. I would sometimes read to them from a novel, or one of them would read. The elder one, who was as pretty as the younger, if not even prettier, though she appealed to me less, went out of her way to be particularly charming to me. She was always there when I had my lesson, and sometimes prolonged it so that I felt obliged to offer her father two tickets instead of only one—an arrangement which he would not accept. The younger sister, although never unfriendly to me, was inclined to be reserved and did not come to relieve the elder unless her father called her.

The reason for this became clear to me one evening. When the dancing was over and I was about to go into the sitting-

room with the elder sister, she stopped me, saying: "Let us wait here for a moment. The fact is—my sister has a fortune-teller in there laying the cards for her, to find out how things stand with an absent friend with whom she is deeply in love and on whom she sets all her hopes. My own heart is free," she went on, "and I must get used to seeing it scorned." I replied with a few airy compliments and told her that she could soon find out about that by consulting the wise woman herself. I said I would like to do so too, having for a long time wanted to have my fortune told, but never being able to believe in it. She said that this was a great mistake. There was nothing in the world, she said, one could trust more implicitly than the oracle of the cards; only one must not consult it in a spirit of idle mischief, but solely in matters of real importance to one's self. I did at last persuade her to let us go into the other room, as soon as she had made sure that the consultation was over. We found her sister very cheerful, a good deal more familiar with me than usual, and gay, almost witty. For having become sure of her absent lover, she apparently thought there was no harm in making herself pleasant to a present admirer of her sister's, as she considered me to be.

Now, with promises of a further liberal fee, they talked the old woman into reading the cards for the elder sister and myself. After going through the usual preparatory rites, she began to lay the cards, first of all for the girl. She considered the lie of the cards very carefully, then seemed to hesitate, and would not say what was in her mind. "I can see for myself," said the younger girl, who had learnt something of these magical performances, "you hesitate because you do not want to tell my sister something unpleasant. But *that* is an unlucky card!" The elder turned pale, but said with an effort to be calm: "Come, speak up! After all, it isn't a matter of life and death!" After heaving a deep sigh the old woman pointed out that the girl was in love and was not loved in return, there was another person in the way, and a good deal more of the same kind. The poor girl was con-

siderably embarrassed. The old woman thought she could improve matters by holding out hopes of letters and money. "I don't expect any letters," the girl said, "and I don't care about money. If what you say is true and I am in love, then I deserve a heart to love me in return." "Let us see if we can do better," the old woman said, shuffling the cards and laying them out a second time. But we could all see that it was even worse this time. The card symbolising the pretty girl was not only in a still lonelier position, but also surrounded by various kinds of trouble; the young man was still further off and the intervening figures were still nearer. The old woman wanted to make a third attempt, in the hope of better luck; but the girl could not restrain herself any longer, burst into tears and turned round, sobbing as though her heart would break, and rushed out of the room. I did not know what to do. I preferred to remain with the younger sister, though I knew I ought, for pity's sake, to go to the other; I was really in an awkward position. "Go and comfort Lucinde," the younger girl said. "Go after her!" I hesitated. How could I comfort her without somehow telling her I was fond of her, and how could I bring myself to do that, quite coldly and collectedly, in such circumstances? "Let us both go together," I said to Emilie. "I am not sure that my presence will do her much good," she replied. However, we went along, only to find the door bolted. Lucinde did not answer, however much we knocked, called and pleaded. "We must just leave her," Emilie said. "She is determined to have her own way." And when I came to think of it, remembering her manner from the beginning of our acquaintance, there was always something excitable and unbalanced about her and she showed her special liking for me mainly by refraining from making me the victim of her moods. What was I to do? I paid the old woman well for the mischief she had done and was about to go, when Emilie said: "I insist on having the cards cut for you now." The old woman was ready. "Well, I shall not stop to see it!" I exclaimed, and hurried downstairs.

I could not bring myself to go there the next day. Early in the morning of the third day I received a message from Emilie, brought by a boy who had often brought me notes from the sisters and taken flowers and fruit back for them; she particularly wanted me to come that day. I went along at the usual time and found the father alone. He suggested a number of improvements in my steps, my way of moving forward and backward, and my bearing generally, and seemed on the whole to be satisfied with me. His younger daughter came in towards the end of the lesson and danced a very graceful minuet with me, moving so extraordinarily charmingly that her father assured us he could not remember having seen a more handsome and accomplished couple dancing on his floor. After the lesson I went into the sitting-room, as usual. The father left us alone. I asked where Lucinde was. "She is in bed," Emilie said. "I think it is just as well. You need not be concerned about her. The mental sickness from which she is suffering is best cured if she thinks herself ill in body. She has not the slightest desire to die, and so she will do what we tell her. We have certain old wives' remedies which she takes; then she rests and the storm gradually subsides. She is very good and sweet when she has these imaginary illnesses, and as she is really perfectly well and only her emotions are affected, she thinks out all kinds of romantic ways of dying and frightens herself in a way she enjoys, just like children listening to ghost-stories. Yesterday evening, for instance, she told me in the most impassioned way that she was really going to die this time and that the ungrateful, deceiving young man who had first been so gallant to her and was now treating her so cruelly was not to be brought to her again until she was really at death's door; then she meant to reproach him bitterly and immediately give up the ghost."

"I am positive," I exclaimed, "that I never made any declaration of affection to her. I know someone who can go bail for me on that score."

Emilie smiled. "I quite understand you," she replied, "and

if we are not clever enough to be firm now, we shall all be in a bad way. What will you say if I ask you not to go on with your lessons? I know you have four tickets still from last month and my father has already said that he could not conscientiously go on taking your money, unless you meant to take up dancing seriously. He said you know all that a young man in society needs."

"And this advice to stay away from your house comes from you, Emilie?" I asked.

"Yes, it does," she said, "but it is not my own idea. Listen to me. When you hurried away, the day before yesterday, I had the cards cut for you, and they told the same story three times, more definitely each time. You were surrounded by all sorts of good and pleasant things, friends and important men, and there was money too. Women were at some distance. My poor sister was always farthest off. There was another who came nearer to you each time, but she never reached your side, for there was a third person, a man, in between. I must confess that I took this second woman to be myself, and after hearing me say as much, you should be able to appreciate how well-meant my advice is. I am engaged to a man who has gone away and whom up till now I loved more than the whole world. But it might happen that your presence would become more important to me with the passing of time. And how would you feel between two sisters, one of whom you had made unhappy by being in love with her, and the other by not being in love with her? And all this misery for nothing, and the time so short. For even if we had not already known who you are and what the future has in store for you, the cards made it utterly plain to me. Goodbye," she said, giving me her hand. I hesitated. "And now," she said, drawing me towards the door, "to make sure that this is really the last time that we see each other, take what I would not give you at any other time." She put her arms round my neck and kissed me very tenderly. I took her in my arms and held her tight.

At this moment the other door of the room burst open and

the elder sister rushed in, wearing a thin but decorous night-dress, and cried: "You shall not be the only one to say goodbye to him!" Emilie let go of me and Lucinde seized me, clung to me tightly, pressed her black curly hair against my cheeks and stayed in this position for some time. And so I found myself in the very dilemma with the two sisters that Emilie had prophesied a moment earlier. Then Lucinde let me go and gazed intently into my eyes. I tried to take her hand, meaning to say something friendly, but she turned away, walked furiously up and down the room a few times, and then threw herself into a corner of the sofa. Emilie went over to her, only to be repulsed immediately. And now followed a scene which it still makes me uncomfortable to think of and which, although it was not really melodramatic at the time, but merely the sort of thing one would expect from a French girl of excitable temperament, yet could only be reproduced properly on the stage by a sensitive and experienced actress.

Lucinde overwhelmed her sister with reproaches. "This is not the first time," she cried, "that you have robbed me of someone's heart when it was drawn to me. It was the same with the other, who then became engaged to you under my very eyes. I had to look on, and I bore it. But I know how many thousand tears it cost me! And now you have snatched this one from me, without letting the other go. I wonder how many you can manage to hold all at one and the same time? I am frank and good-natured, and everyone thinks he soon knows me and can cast me aside. You are quiet and secretive and people imagine heaven knows what depths under it all. There is nothing behind it but a cold, selfish heart that does not care how other people suffer for its sake. Only no one recognises that so easily, because it is hidden deep in your breast, just as they don't recognise my warm, loyal heart that I wear on my sleeve."

Without saying anything, Emilie sat down beside her sister, who was growing more and more excited as she went on talking and was beginning to let out various little secrets that I did not think it would do me any good to know. Emilie,

who was trying to calm her sister down, made a sign to me behind her back that I should leave them. But jealousy and suspicion having a thousand eyes, Lucinde noticed this too. She jumped up and came up to me, though without violence now. She stood in front of me and seemed to be thinking about something. Then she said: "I know I have lost you. I make no further claim to you. But you shall not have him either, sister!" As she spoke she took my head in her hands, seizing me by the hair, pulled my face to hers and kissed me on the mouth over and over again. "Now," she exclaimed, "you may fear my curse! Misfortune after misfortune, for ever and ever, on the woman who first kisses these lips again! Now see if you dare to take up with him again! I know that heaven hears me this time. And you, sir, go now, quickly, quickly, as fast as you can!"

I leaped down the stairs with the firm resolve never to enter that house again.

# HERDER

THE most important thing that happened to me [at Strasbourg], and one that was to have extremely significant consequences, was that I met Herder and soon became closely acquainted with him. He was travelling companion to the Prince of Holstein-Eutin, who was suffering from melancholia, and had come to Strasbourg with him. As soon as local society heard of his presence in the town, everyone longed to meet him. I was lucky enough to do so quite unexpectedly, by accident. It was like this: I had gone to the Zum Geist inn\* to pay a call on some distinguished stranger or other. Just at the bottom of the stairs I met with a man who was also on his way up, apparently a clergyman. This I gathered from the fact that his powdered hair was tied in a queue and from his black clothes, also suggesting his profession, but more than anything else from a long black silk cloak, the hem of which he had gathered up and tucked into his pocket. This rather unusual but on the whole elegant and attractive figure, which I had already heard talked of, left me in no doubt that he was the celebrated Herder,† and I showed my certainty of the fact by addressing him by name. He asked my name, which cannot have conveyed anything to him; but he seemed to like my directness, reacted in the friendliest way and dropped into eager talk with me as we went on up the stairs. I have quite forgotten on whom we were calling. The main thing was that as we left I asked Herder if I might visit him, to which he agreed in a friendly manner. I lost no time in taking advantage of this opportunity, and the more often I saw him, the more I felt drawn to him. He had a kind of gentleness that suited him well without being too suave. He had a round face, with an

\* At the Sign of the Holy Ghost.

† Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), theologian and man of letters. His collection of ballads had the importance of Percy's *Reliques* for Goethe's generation.



imposing forehead, a snub nose and a rather thick mouth that was still extremely charming and characteristic. Under black eyebrows were a pair of coal-black eyes, none the less impressive for one of them generally being inflamed and red. He asked a great many questions, trying to get to know all about me and my position, and I found myself steadily more attracted to him. I was altogether very communicative, and from him I had no secrets at all. However, it was not long before I came across the negative side of his character, which caused me quite considerable distress. I had told him all sorts of things about my early tastes and hobbies, among other things about a collection of seals that I had got together mainly with the help of our family friend who had a great deal of correspondence. I had arranged them according to the State Calendar, incidentally becoming thoroughly familiar with the arms of all the potentates, greater and lesser powers and principalities, down to the nobility, and I had often found it useful and interesting to have these heraldic emblems at my fingertips, especially during the coronation celebrations. I talked about these things rather complacently. Herder, however, took a different view of it all. He did not merely disapprove of this interest of mine, but managed to make it ridiculous and almost loathsome in my own eyes.

I was to have a great deal to put up with from his spirit of contradiction, for he decided to stay on in Strasbourg, partly because he intended to separate from the prince, partly because of some eye-trouble he had. This trouble is one of the most distressing and unpleasant, and all the worse because it can only be cured by a painful, highly disagreeable and risky operation. The lachrymatory sac is blocked at the bottom, so that the moisture in it cannot run into the nose nor escape in any other direction, as the adjoining bone has no opening as a natural way out for the secretion. Hence the bottom of the sac must be perforated and the bone pierced. Then a horse-hair is drawn through the tear-duct into the opened sac and so into the new passage opening out of it; this hair has to be moved to and fro every day, in order

to keep the passage open, and all this can only be done if a local incision is made from outside.

Having separated from the prince, Herder moved into lodgings of his own and decided to have this operation done by Lobstein. Now I benefited from my exercises in hardening my nerves\*: I was able to be present at the operation and to be helpful to my distinguished friend in a number of little ways. I could not but admire his great patience and powers of endurance; for neither during the many surgical interventions nor during the continual painful dressings did he show any irritation at all, and in fact he seemed to be the one of us who suffered least. However, in the intervals we had to stand a good deal from his changeable moods. I say "we" for besides myself there was an easy-going Russian called Pegelow with him most of the time. Pegelow was a friend of Herder's from old days in Riga and, though by no means a youngster, was trying to learn some more surgery under Lobstein's guidance. Herder could be utterly delightful and brilliant, but he could just as easily show an irritable side. All human beings, of course, have this faculty of alternately attracting and repelling, some more, some less, in cycles of varying length and intensity; few people can really control these moods, though many may appear to do so. Where Herder was concerned, the predominance of his contradictory, bitter, biting humour was certainly due to his disease and the sufferings it caused him. This is rather often the case in life; we pay too little attention to the moral effect of disease and so judge many personalities very unjustly, because we assume all human beings to be healthy and expect them to behave accordingly.

All the time he was having this treatment, I visited Herder morning and evening; sometimes I stayed whole days with him and soon learnt to put up with his scoffing and fault-finding all the more as I came to appreciate his good and great qualities, his wide knowledge and his profound under-

\* By attending anatomical demonstrations, climbing the minster spire, and visiting churchyards; deliberate self-discipline undertaken early in his stay at Strasbourg.

standing more and more every day. This good-natured fire-eater had a great and significant influence on me. He was five years older than I, which makes a great difference in one's youth; and as I acknowledged him for what he was and tried to appreciate what he had already achieved, he was bound to gain the upper hand over me. But it was not a very comfortable state of affairs. For those older people with whom I had mixed up till now had tried to mould me in a sympathetic way and had perhaps spoilt me with their indulgence. But from Herder one could never expect any approval, whatever one did. And now, as there was a constant conflict between my great affection and respect for him on the one hand and, on the other, the sense of discomfort he aroused in me, I began to suffer from an emotional discordance such as I had never before experienced in my life. As the things he talked about were always important, whether he was asking or answering questions or just holding forth, inevitably he carried me ahead into new spheres of thought every day, indeed every hour. In Leipzig I had adopted a rather narrow-minded attitude, and the conditions under which I lived in Frankfurt obviously did not do much to increase my general knowledge of German literature; indeed, those religio-mystical chemical pursuits of mine had led me into obscure regions. Hence I was almost entirely unaware of what had been going on in the great literary world outside. Now, through Herder, I was suddenly made acquainted with all the new strivings and the directions that they seemed to be taking. He himself had already become well known and his *Fragmente*\* and *Kritische Walder*† had put him on a level with those distinguished men who had for some time attracted public attention all through Germany. It is hard to imagine or to describe the intense activity of such a mind and the ferment going on in such a personality. But the effort underlying all that was certainly great; it is easy to see this now, when one considers how much he achieved and for how many years afterwards his influence prevailed.

\* Fragments

† Critical Forests (as it were: Leaves of Criticism)

We had not been on these friendly terms for long, when he confided in me that he meant to enter the competition for the prize offered in Berlin for the best essay on the origin of language. His work was already nearly finished, and as he had very clear handwriting, he was soon able to give me a legible manuscript, chapter by chapter. I had never given any thought to such subjects; I was still too much caught up in the centre of things to be able to think of the beginning and the end. Besides, the question struck me as somewhat futile; for if God had created man as man, He must have given him language together with the gift of walking erect; and just as man must have noticed at once that he could walk and take hold of things, so he must also have become aware that he could use his throat for singing, and his tongue, palate and lips for modifying these sounds in various ways. If man was of divine origin, then so was language; and if man was a natural being, within the limits of nature, then language was natural too. These two things seemed to me as inseparable as soul and body. Sussmilch, who, for all his crude realism, had some rather fantastic notions, had declared for the divine origin, in other words, that God had been schoolmaster to the first human beings. The aim of Herder's analysis was to show that man himself could and must have arrived at language through his own resources. I read this essay with great pleasure, and it did a great deal for my development; but I was not yet sufficiently advanced either in knowledge or in thought to give a reasoned judgment on it. So I expressed my approval to the author, merely adding a few remarks from my own point of view. But it was all the same whether one gave one's unconditional or conditional approval; in either case one was scolded and reviled. The fat surgeon had less patience than I; he humorously refused to read the prize-essay, assuring us that he was far from being intellectually equipped for thinking about such abstractions. On the contrary, he insisted on playing ombre, as we usually did in the evening.

In spite of his very disagreeable and painful treatment, our

friend Herder lost none of his energy; but it became steadily less benevolent. He could not even write a note asking for something, without seasoning it with a sneer. So, for instance, he once wrote to me:

“ If thou hast in Cicero’s letters the letters of Brutus,  
Thou, whom consolers scholastic, decked out in  
magnificent bindings,  
Soothe from their well-planed shelves—yet more  
by the outside than inside,  
Thou, who from Gods art descended, or Goths, or  
of origin goatish,  
Goethe, send them to me ”

Candidly, it was not in very good taste to take such jocular liberties with my name; for a person’s name is not like a cloak, which only hangs round him and which may perhaps be pulled and tugged at, but a perfectly fitting garment grown over and around him like his very skin, which one cannot scrape and scratch without hurting the man himself.

There was, however, some foundation for the first reproach. The fact was that I had brought with me to Strasbourg those works which I had got in my exchange with Langer, and also various handsome editions from my father’s collection, and set them all up on a neat bookshelf, with the best intentions of using them. But how was my time, which I frittered away in hundreds of activities, to be long enough for reading? Herder, who had a quick eye for books since he needed them every moment, on his first visit noticed my beautiful collection, but soon also noticed that I made no use of it at all; for which reason he, the sworn enemy of all pretence and ostentation, missed no opportunity of teasing me about it.

Another lampoon of his occurs to me, which he sent after me one evening when I had been talking to him at length about the Dresden art gallery. Admittedly, I had not penetrated to the higher implications of the Italian school, but I had been much taken with Domenico Feti, an excellent artist, though a humourist and so not of the first rank. As Biblical subjects were the rule in his day, he went in for the

New Testament parables and was fond of painting them with much originality, taste and good humour, bringing them very close to ordinary everyday life. The details of his compositions, both fresh and witty as they were, with all his bold draughtsmanship, had made a vivid impression on me. Herder mocked at this childlike artistic enthusiasm of mine in the following manner:

“From sympathy  
The master I like best of all  
Domenico Feti they call.  
A parable from Scripture he is able  
Neatly to turn into crazy fable,  
From sympathy—thou crazy parable!”

I could quote several more such jokes, more or less gay or abstruse, bright or bitter. They did not annoy me, but they did make me feel uncomfortable. But as I very much valued everything that contributed to my education and as I had several times given up opinions and tastes, I soon adapted myself to it and merely tried, as far as was possible from the point of view I had at the time, to distinguish between fair criticism and unfair abuse. And so never a day passed without giving me much food for thought.

I learnt to know poetry from quite another side, in quite another light—one that appealed to me very much. Hebrew poetry, which he discussed very brilliantly, along the same lines as his predecessor Lowth, folk-poetry, which he urged us to look for everywhere in Alsace, and the most ancient poetic records all bore witness to the fact that poetry as a whole was the property of all nations of the world, not the private inheritance of a few select men of culture. I drank this all in, and the more eager I was to receive, the more generous he was in giving, so that we spent most interesting hours together. I tried to go on with my other studies in natural science, and as one always has enough time if one is determined to make good use of it, I occasionally succeeded in doing twice or three times as much as usual. As to the wealth of experience in these few weeks that we spent

together, I think I can say they contained the seed of everything that Herder gradually achieved later, and that through this contact with him I was in the fortunate position of being able to complete and round off everything I had previously thought and learnt and to enlarge it and link it to a higher purpose. Had Herder been more methodical, he might also have given me invaluable guidance for further, solid progress in my intellectual development; but he was more inclined to test and stimulate than to lead and guide. For instance, it was he who first introduced me to Hamann's\* writings, which he valued very greatly. But instead of explaining them to me and making me understand the slant and drift of that extraordinary intellect, he was generally merely amused by the queer ways in which I struggled to grasp the meaning of these sybilline works. There was something, however, in Hamann's writings which appealed to me, something to which I surrendered myself without knowing where it came from or where it would take me.

After the treatment had been going on longer than had been expected, Lobstein seemed to be doubtful about what to do next and began all over again, so that there looked like being no end to it; and when Pegelow had confided in me privately that there was little hope of a successful cure, the whole relationship became rather dismal. Herder became impatient and irritable; he could not get on with his work as he had been doing, and it was all the more necessary for him not to overdo things, as the failure of the operation began to be blamed on his over-strenuous mental exertion and uninterrupted, lively, even gay association with us. The fact of the matter was that after all this pain and suffering the artificial lachrymatory tract would not form; the operation was a failure. In order to prevent the trouble from becoming worse, it was necessary to let the wound heal up. Admirable as Herder's powers of endurance had been under the great pain of the operation, now there was something really sublime in his mournful, even grim resignation to the thought of being

\* J. G. Hamann (1730-1788), the philosophical writer.

so disfigured for life; it earned him, once and for all, the homage of those friends who were with him then. This trouble, marring a remarkable face, was all the more distressing to him as he had won the love of a delightful woman whom he had met in Darmstadt. It was doubtless mainly for her sake that he had subjected himself to this treatment, in order to go back to her feeling more free and cheerful and looking more presentable, and to have no more qualms about confirming their engagement, which was not yet quite settled. He was in a hurry to get away from Strasbourg, and because his stay here had so far turned out to be as expensive as it was unpleasant, I borrowed a sum of money for him, which he promised to pay back by a certain date. Time passed, and no money came. My creditor did not actually press me, but I was in a rather awkward position for some weeks. Then at last the money came, accompanied by a quite characteristic letter: instead of thanks or apologies, it contained nothing but satirical doggerel, which would have bewildered or completely alienated most people. It did not upset me much, for I had formed such an enormously high opinion of him that the small, annoying things about him simply did not count.



## A RIDE THROUGH ALSACE

Now we\* were travelling through mountainous forest country that, to someone coming from a splendidly fertile district, inevitably seemed wild and mournful, with no attraction other than the hidden riches far below the surface. Here, within a short distance, we came across two kinds of machinery, one simple and the other complex, the first a scythe-smithy, the second a block-and-pulley apparatus. The first gave us the satisfaction of seeing a substitute for manual labour; the second was fascinating in being a more highly developed organism, almost like something with consciousness and intelligence. In the alum works we asked for detailed information about the production and purification of this important raw material. When we noticed a great heap of white, greasy stuff of a loose, earthy consistency, and asked what it was for, the workmen smiled, saying that it was the froth thrown up during the boiling process. It was being collected for Herr Stauf, who hoped to make some good use of this, too. "Is Herr Stauf still alive?" my companion exclaimed in amazement. We were assured that he was and told that the road we were following would take us fairly close by his lonely house.

The way now went uphill along the conduits for bringing the alum water down, and past the main workings of a mine called the Landgrube, which produces the famous Duttweil coal. When this coal is dry it is dark blue, like steel, and at every movement very beautiful rainbow-coloured lights play over the surface. But we were not particularly drawn to the gloomy pit-heads, the less so as there was plenty of what they produced lying strewn all around us. Then we came to open ditches where the calcined alum schists were soaked in lye, and soon after that, in spite of having been told what to

\* Goethe took this vacation trip with two Alsatians, Weyland and Zimmermann, fellow-boarders at his pension in Strasbourg.

expect, we were startled by a strange sight. Entering a chasm, we found ourselves in the region of the burning mountain. There was a strong smell of sulphur; one side of the ravine was almost red-hot, the reddish stone of it burnt almost white; dense steam came pouring out of the crevices, and we could feel how hot the ground was even through the thick soles of our boots. Nobody knows how this part of the mountain was set alight, but it is a very useful accident for the production of alum, for the schists of which the surface of the mountain consists lie there already smelted and merely need a short soaking. The chasm itself came into existence through the gradual clearing out and using up of the calcined schists. We climbed up out of this ravine and found ourselves on the top of the mountain. There was a lovely beech-wood all around, above the ravine, some of the trees already scorched and dead and others withering, while those further off were still fresh and green, undreaming of that menacing heat creeping nearer and nearer to their own roots.

There were several openings in the ground up here with fumes puffing out of them; others had ceased to smoke. So for ten years now this fire had been smouldering in the old dilapidated shafts and galleries that undermine the mountain. It may also work its way through crevices into new coal-beds. A few hundred paces further on in the forest obvious signs of rich seams had been found, but the miners had not got very far before they were overwhelmed and driven back by clouds of smoke and steam. The opening was filled up again, but we found smoke still coming from the place when we passed it, on our way to where our hermit chemist lived. The house lay sunk among woods and hills, among delightful winding valleys. The earth round about is black and coally; the coal often appears on the surface. A philosopher of fire—*philosophus per ignem*, as the expression used to be—could not have found a better place to settle down.

We came to a small, by no means uncomfortable house, and found Herr Stauf, who instantly recognised my friend and hailed him with lamentations about the new government

We gathered from what he said that for external and perhaps also for internal reasons the alum works, like many other well-meant schemes, were not paying, and other complaints of the same sort. He was among the chemists of that time who, in spite of a strong sense of what could be achieved with natural products, became wrapped up in crankish schemes of a trivial and irrelevant kind and, because of their inadequate knowledge, were not practical enough to make their work economically profitable. So, for instance, the use that he expected to make of his alum-froth lay in the remote future and he had nothing to show but a cake of sal ammoniac, which was all the burning mountain had yielded.

Delighted to have got an audience for his complaints, the decrepit, withered little man dragged himself along, with a shoe on one foot and a slipper on the other, always pulling up his stockings, which were always slipping down again, leading us up the mountain to the resin works which he had built himself and which now to his grief were falling into ruin. Here we saw a row of interconnecting furnaces where coal was to be desulphurated and made fit for use in iron works; but the plan was also to make use of the oil and resin, and even of the soot, so that the whole scheme failed as a result of branching out in too many directions. While the late prince was still alive, it had been carried on as a hobby, in the hope of something coming of it; now people wanted to see a profit, of which there was no evidence.

After we had left our alchemistic friend to his solitude, we hurried on — for it was getting late — to the glass works in Friedrichstal, to pay a flying visit to one of the most important and wonderful manifestations of man's technical ability.

But what interested us young fellows almost as much as these remarkable experiences, was various amusing adventures of ours and, not far from Neukirch, just as darkness was falling, a surprising display of fireworks. For just as a few nights earlier, on the banks of the Saar, there had been luminous clouds of glow-worms floating round us, among rocks and bushes, so now the spark-spitting forges were

throwing out a brilliant shower of fireworks towards us. It was pitch dark when we went into the foundries down in the valley, enjoying the strange half-gloom of these log-caverns, faintly lit from the small opening in the white-hot furnace. The noise of the water and the bellows worked by it and the frightful rushing and whistling of the blast of air roaring into the molten ore, deafening and almost stunning us, finally drove us away. We spent the night at Neukirch, a little place straggling up the side of the hill.

But in spite of all the many sights and sounds and new experiences of the day, I could not yet settle down to rest. So I left my friend to his happy dreams and walked to the hunting-lodge, some distance up the mountain. From here there was a wide view out over the forest and the hills that were outlined against the clear night-sky, though their slopes and depths were hidden from my gaze in the darkness. Although it was in good condition, the building was as empty as it was lonely; there was no door-keeper, no huntsman anywhere. I sat outside the great glass doors, on the steps which run around the whole terrace. Here, in the midst of the mountains, high above the wooded, gloomy earth, which seemed still darker against the sparkling skyline of a summer night, and a vault of stars flaming above me, I sat all by myself in this desolate place for a long time, feeling that I had never known such solitude before. How sweetly then I was startled by the sound of a few bugle-horns in the distance, all at once stirring the quiet air like a fragrant breeze. It recalled to my mind a beloved girl whose image had been blotted out by the bright variety of these travel-days; it grew clearer and clearer until it drove me from my place back to the inn, where I made arrangements to leave as early as possible.

## THE FIRST VISIT TO SESENHEIM

**M**Y meal-time companion, Weyland, an Alsatian by birth, who brightened up his quiet life of hard work by occasional visits to friends and relatives round about, was helpful to me on many of my little expeditions by introducing me to various families in various places, either personally or by letters of introduction. He had often talked to me about a country parson living near Drusenheim, six leagues from Strasbourg, with a good living, a sensible wife and a couple of attractive daughters. The hospitality and charm of this family always came in for high praise. This was quite enough to attract a young cavalier already accustomed to spending all his leisure days and hours in the open air, on horseback; and so we decided to make this trip. But first I made my friend promise that when introducing me he would say nothing either good or bad about me, but treat me altogether indifferently and not mind my appearing, if not badly, at least rather seedily and carelessly dressed. He agreed, looking forward to some fun.

It is a pardonable whim of eminent men to hide their external advantages at times in order to let their intrinsic human qualities show up more clearly. This is what makes the incognito of princes, and the adventures resulting from it, always so very attractive—gods appearing in disguise, setting double value on all the kindness shown them as individuals and able either to make light of anything unpleasant or to avoid it. It seems quite natural that Jupiter should enjoy his incognito in the house of Philemon and Baucis, and Henry the Fourth his among his peasants after a day's hunting, and we approve of it. But some people may consider it unforgivable arrogance for a young man of no fame or importance to think of amusing himself by assuming an incognito. However, as we are here not concerned with the goodness or badness of attitudes and actions, but with their existence and

occurrence, let us look at the amusing side of the thing and forgive the young man his conceit, all the more, as I must add that from my early childhood a love of disguises had been encouraged in me by my serious-minded father himself.

This time, too, partly with old clothes of my own, partly with borrowed clothes and by the way I combed my hair, if I had not actually disfigured myself, at least I had got myself up so weirdly that my friend could not help laughing as we went along, particularly as I could do perfect imitations of the posture and movements on horseback of the amateurish equestrians generally referred to as "Latin riders." The good road, the glorious weather and the nearness of the Rhine put us in the best of spirits. In Drusenheim we stopped for a moment, he to tidy himself up, and I to rehearse my part, from which I was rather afraid of lapsing. The character of the country here is that of the open plain of Alsace. We rode along a pleasant footpath through the meadows and soon reached Sesenheim, where we left our horses at the inn and strolled along to the parsonage. "Don't be put off," Weyland said, pointing to the house from some distance, "because it looks like a derelict old farmhouse. It's all the younger and livelier inside." We entered the yard. I liked the look of it all very much; for it had the particular picturesque quality which had so much enchanted me in Dutch painting. The heavy touch of time, which no human handiwork escapes, could be seen everywhere. The house, barn and stables were at just that point of dilapidation where one wavers between repairing and reconstructing and finally puts off the one without doing the other.

The whole place was quiet and deserted, just as the village had been. We found the father, a withdrawn, yet friendly little man, all on his own; the family was out in the fields. He welcomed us and offered us some refreshments, which we declined. My friend hurried off to find the womenfolk and I remained alone with our host. "It may puzzle you," he said, "to find me, with my comfortable position in this prosperous village, living in such poor quarters. But it all comes

from shilly-shallying. The parish, and indeed higher authorities, have long promised to rebuild the house for me. Several plans have been drawn up already, examined and altered, and none of them altogether rejected, but none carried out. It has gone on for so many years that I am nearly beside myself with impatience." I answered him in what I thought was the right way to buoy up his hopes and encourage him to be more vigorous in the matter. He went on very confidently, giving me descriptions of the various people on whom such things depended, and although he was not much of a hand at character-drawing, I did get a very good idea of how the whole business had inevitably come to a standstill. There was something characteristic about his trustful friendliness; he talked to me as though he had known me for at least ten years, without there being anything in his way of looking at me to suggest that he paid me any particular attention.

At last my friend came in with the mother, who seemed to look at me quite differently. She had regular features and an intelligent expression; she must have been beautiful when she was younger. She was tall and slim, though not more so than suited her age; seen from behind she still looked youthful and attractive. A moment later the elder daughter came bursting in, asking for Friederike, just as her mother and my friend had done. The father assured them that he had not seen her since all three of them went out. His daughter rushed out again to look for her sister. The mother brought us some refreshments and Weyland continued his conversation with her and her husband, talking entirely about common acquaintances and experiences, as generally does happen when friends meet after some time and exchange news about the individual members of a larger circle. Listening, I got to know something about all these people and what I might expect from the acquaintance with them.

The elder daughter came hurrying back into the room, uneasy at not having found her sister. She and the mother were anxious about her and inveighed against various bad habits of hers. Only the father said quite calmly: "Leave her

to herself, she will not get lost." At this very moment she came in at the door. What a lovely star now rose in this pastoral firmament! Both girls wore what was called German dress, and this almost obsolete national costume suited Friederike particularly well. In a short full white skirt with a flounce, revealing very pretty little feet and ankles, a tight white bodice and a black taffeta apron, there she was on the border-line between a peasant girl and a young lady from town. Slim and light, she moved as though her body had no weight; only the thick fair plaits round the trim little head seemed almost too heavy for the frail neck. Her cheerful blue eyes had a candid gaze, and her pretty little snub nose turned up into the air as unconcernedly as though the world could hold no worries at all. Her straw hat dangled from her arm. So at the first glance I had the delight of seeing her in all her grace and loveliness.

From now on I began to tone down my acting, half ashamed of playing a joke on such good people. I had plenty of time to observe them, for the girls took up the conversation, talking eagerly and enthusiastically. All their neighbours and relatives were again talked over, and to my imagination there appeared such a swarm of uncles, aunts and cousins, arrivals and departures, godparents and guests, that I felt myself transported into the liveliest of worlds. All members of the family had spoken a few words to me and the mother looked at me each time she came in or went out, but it was Friederike who first got into conversation with me. I was looking through some music that was lying about, and she asked me if I played. When I told her that I did, she asked me to play something; but her father objected, insisting that the proper thing was for the guest to be entertained first with some music or a song.

She played several pieces, quite well, in the usual provincial style, on a piano which the schoolmaster should long ago have found time to tune. Then she tried to sing a song, one of those sentimental, melancholy ones; but she failed. She stood up, saying with a smile—or rather, with her charac-



teristic look of serene happiness: "If I sing badly I cannot put the blame on the piano and the schoolmaster. But just wait until we are out of doors, then you shall hear my Alsatian and Swiss songs. They sound much better."

During supper I was preoccupied with an idea that had struck me before, so much so that I sank into thoughtful silence, though I was often roused from my meditations by the liveliness of the elder sister and the charm of the younger. I was speechless with amazement at finding myself in the midst of the Vicar of Wakefield's\* family, in the flesh. Admittedly the father could not compare with that excellent man—but where, after all, could one find the like of him? On the other hand, all the dignity that the husband had there, the wife had here. One could not look at her without a feeling of shy respect. It was obvious that she had been well brought up; her manner was quiet, easy, cheerful and engaging.

Although the elder daughter had not Olivia's far-famed beauty, she had a good figure and was lively, almost boisterous; she bustled about everywhere, helping her mother with everything. It was not difficult to put Friederike in place of Primrose's daughter Sophia, for though little is said about her, it is made clear that she was a lovable girl; and so was Friederike. As the same occupations and conditions, wherever they exist, produce the same or at least similar effects, it was natural enough that many things were talked about, and many things happened, here that had also happened in the Wakefield family. But when at last a younger son, long heralded and impatiently expected by his father, dashed into the room and sat down at the table, boldly and without more ado, taking little notice of the guests, I could hardly refrain from exclaiming: "And here's Moses, too!"

From the talk at table I gathered more about this country and family circle, as they chatted about various amusing incidents that had happened here and there. Friederike, who was sitting beside me, took the opportunity of describing to

\* Herder had been reading a translation of Goldsmith's book aloud to Goethe and his friends

me a number of places well worth visiting. One anecdote always calls forth another, and so I was soon able to join in the conversation with similar stories of my own; and as there was no lack of a good local wine, I was in danger of forgetting to play my part. But my more cautious friend made the beautiful moonlight an excuse for suggesting a walk, which was at once agreed to. He gave his arm to the elder daughter, and I gave mine to the younger; so we strolled through the broad meadows, feeling the reality of the heavens above us more than the earth stretching away on every side and fading into the distance. But there was no moonshine in Friederike's talk; the clarity with which she spoke turned night into day, and there was nothing in it to suggest or evoke any sentimentality. The only thing was that she talked to me more personally than before, describing her own way of living, the countryside and the people she knew, in the light of my getting to know them too. For, she added, she hoped that I would not be an exception, but would visit them again, as everyone did who had once been to see them.

I found it very pleasant to listen in silence as she described the little world in which she lived and the people whom she particularly valued. She gave me such a clear and delightful idea of her life that it had quite a strange effect on me, all at once making me feel a deep dissatisfaction at not having had a share in it before, and at the same time an aching envy of all the people who had had the good luck to be near her all the time. I pricked up my ears at once, just as though I had had a right to, whenever she talked about men, whether they were neighbours, friends or relatives, and turned my suspicions now here, now there. But how was I to discover anything, a stranger knowing nothing at all about the circumstances! Gradually she became more and more talkative and I more silent. It was so good to listen to her. And as I only heard her voice, while her face, like the rest of the world, seemed to be floating in the glimmering half-light, I felt as though I were gazing into her heart, which opened up before

me, so clear and simple, in the innocent unconstraint of her chatter.

When Weyland and I went up to the guest-room which had been got ready for us, he at once began making rather self-satisfied jokes, congratulating himself on having sprung such a surprise on me with this counterpart to the Primrose family. I fell in with his mood, saying how grateful I was. "Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "Here you have the whole story. As this family is so like the other, the gentleman in disguise here may do himself the honour of imagining himself Mr Burchell. Furthermore, as we are not so much in need of villains in ordinary life as in novels, I shall now adopt the nephew's part and behave better than he did."

However, I changed the subject at once, in spite of the pleasure it gave me, and asked him to assure me on his word of honour that he had really not given away who I was. "No, indeed!" he declared, and I knew I could believe him. On the contrary, he said, they had asked after that gay companion of his in Strasbourg who took his meals at the same boarding-house, about whom they had heard all sorts of wildly absurd stories. I went on to ask other questions. Had she ever been in love? Was she in love now? Was she engaged? The answer to all these questions was: "No."

"Well!" I replied. "I quite fail to understand such a cheerful temperament. If she had loved and lost and found her peace of mind again, or if she were engaged—in either case I could account for it."

So we went on gossiping deep into the night and at day-break I was awake again. My longing to see her again seemed irresistible. But as I was dressing, I was horrified by the confounded clothes I had so recklessly chosen. Each piece of clothing I put on made me look more ridiculous, which was indeed the effect intended. I might have managed to do something about my hair, but when finally I squeezed into the threadbare grey coat I had borrowed and saw how ludicrous I was in sleeves that were too short, I became quite desperate, all the more as I could only see one

piece of myself at a time in the small mirror, and each part looked more absurd than the last.

While I was getting dressed, Weyland had woken up and was gazing out from under the silk quilt with all the contentment of a clear conscience and in cheerful hopes of what the day would bring. I had all the time been envying his fine clothes, hanging over the back of the chair, and if he had been my size, I would have gone off with them under his nose, changed into them outside and then, leaving him with my preposterous garments, I would have hurried out into the garden. He would have been good-humoured enough to get into my clothes, and the comedy would have come to a merry ending in the early morning. But it was no use thinking about this or any other way out. I simply could not bring myself to appear before Friederike again in the disguise of a hard-working, intelligent but poor theological student, which was what Weyland had given me out to be—especially after she had talked in such a friendly way to my assumed self. I stood there angrily wracking my brains; but my ingenuity left me in the lurch. Then Weyland, who was lolling there at his ease and had been scrutinising me for some time, suddenly burst out into loud laughter and exclaimed: “No! There’s no denying it—you look an utter scarecrow!”

“Well, I know what I am going to do,” I retorted violently. “Goodbye! Make my excuses.”

“Are you crazy?” he shouted, jumping out of bed and trying to stop me. But I was already out of the door, down the stairs, out of the house and yard, and off to the inn; in a flash my horse was saddled and I was galloping towards Drusenheim, then through it, and on and on, in a fury of exasperation.

When I thought I was safe, I rode more slowly and now began to feel how very much I disliked going away. However, I resigned myself to my fate, and recalled yesterday evening’s walk with perfect calm, in the secret hope of soon seeing her again. But it was not long before this quiet mood changed into impatience once more, and now I made up my

mind to ride quickly into the town and change and get a good fresh horse, so as to be back there, as I pictured it in my impassioned imagination, by dinner-time or, as was likelier, by dessert or at least towards evening, and so make my apologies.

I was just about to put spurs to my horse, to carry out this plan, when another idea struck me, which seemed a very good one. Yesterday in the inn at Drusenheim I had noticed a very nicely dressed young man, the landlord's son, who had greeted me this morning, too, as I left the yard where he was busy with some farm-work. He was of my size and for a moment I had even thought that he looked slightly like me. It was no sooner thought than done. Back in Drusenheim, I took my horse to the stables and, without beating around the bush, put my proposal to the fellow: I wanted him to lend me his clothes as I had a joke in mind at Sesenheim. I did not have to waste many words. He agreed and appreciated my idea of having some fun with the young ladies; they were so good and kind, he said, especially Mamzell Riekchen, and her parents enjoyed a little light-hearted entertainment, too. He looked me over carefully and, probably concluding from my clothes that I was some poverty-stricken wretch, said: "If you want to get into their good graces, this is the way to go about it." Meanwhile, we had almost finished the exchange of clothes. It was really very trusting of him to let me have his Sunday-best in exchange for what I had on, but he was good-hearted and, besides, he had my horse in the stable. Soon I stood there looking quite smart and bracing myself up proudly. My new friend considered his double with satisfaction. "That'll do the trick, brother," he said, holding out his hand, which I shook heartily. "See you don't come too near my girl. She might mistake you for me!"

It was quite easy for me to part my thick hair like his and after having had a good look at him I completed the joke by blackening my eyebrows with a burnt cork, in imitation of his bushier ones, drawing them together in the middle, to complete my enigmatic enterprise with an enigmatic appear-

ance. "Now," I said, as he handed me his beribboned hat, "isn't there any message you have for the parsonage, which I could take for you in order to make my entry there more natural?" "There is," he replied, "but then you must wait two hours. One of the women in our family has just had a baby. I shall go and offer to take the cake to the pastor's wife, and then you can take it. Pride must pay the price, and so must the joke." I decided to wait. But it seemed to me as though these two hours would never pass and I was frantic with impatience when the third was over before the cake came out of the oven. At last it was handed to me, still quite hot, and I hurried off in the brilliant sunshine with my token, accompanied some way by my double, who offered to come over in the evening and bring my clothes. But this I energetically declined, insisting that I would bring him his clothes back myself.

I had not gone far with my offering, which I carried knotted in a clean napkin, when I saw Weyland in the distance, together with the two girls, coming towards me. My heart beat oppressively, as it really should not have done in this disguise. I stopped, drew a deep breath and tried to decide what I should do. Then I noticed that the lie of the land gave me the advantage: for they were walking on the other side of the stream, and both the stream and some strips of meadow, through which it ran, lay between their footpath and mine. When they had drawn level with me Friederike, who had caught sight of me from a distance, called out: "What have you got for us, George?" I took off my hat, and had the presence of mind to keep it in front of my face, while I held the napkin with the cake in it up in the air. "A christening cake!" she exclaimed. "And how is your sister doing?" "Pretty fair," I answered, trying to adopt some sort of dialect accent, if not exactly Alsatian. "Take it up to the house," the elder sister said, "and if you don't find mother, give it to the maid. But mind you wait for us, we won't be long." I hurried on along my path, with a jaunty, hopeful feeling that as I had been so lucky at the start, the whole thing would

go off well. Before long I was at the parsonage I could not find anyone in the house, nor in the kitchen. I did not want to disturb the master, who was, I supposed, busy in his study; and so I sat down on the bench outside the door, with the cake beside me, and pulled my hat down over my eyes.

I can hardly remember ever feeling anything pleasanter. To be sitting here again beside the door that I had stumbled out of, only a little while ago, in despair; to have seen her again and heard her sweet voice again, a short time after I had been gloomily imagining a long separation; to expect her—and discovery—any moment now, my heart beating hard at the thought, though I knew that in this ambiguous case the discovery need not shame me; and on setting foot in the house, to have played a more amusing joke than any of those laughed at yesterday . . . ! Love and necessity are the best teachers; here they worked together, and their pupil showed himself not unworthy of them.

Then the maid came out of the barn. "Well, have the cakes turned out all right?" she called to me. "And how's your sister?" "Pretty fair," I said, still with my attempt at dialect, and pointed to the cake, without looking up. She took the napkin, grumbling: "What's come over you today? Has Barbara been making eyes at someone else again? You needn't take it out of us. A nice marriage it's going to be, if it goes on like this." As she spoke rather loudly, the pastor came to the window and asked what was going on. She pointed to me. I stood up and turned towards him, still keeping my hat over my face. He said something friendly, asking me to wait, and I went through the garden and was just going in when the pastor's wife called to me as she came through the yard gate. As the sun was shining straight into my face, I resorted to hiding behind my hat again, bowing respectfully. She told me not to leave without having some refreshment, and went into the house. Then I walked up and down in the garden. So far it had all gone very well, but I drew a deep breath when I thought that Weyland and the girls would soon be coming along. Then I was suddenly

taken off my guard by the mother's coming up to me; she was just going to ask me something when she looked me in the face and, recognising me, broke off in the midst of what she was saying. "I was looking for George," she said after a pause. "And it is you I find, young man. How many shapes have you, really?" "Seriously, only one," I said, "but for a joke's sake as many as you like." "Then I shall not spoil the joke," she said, smiling. "Go down the garden and out into the meadow until its strikes midday, then come back and I shall have paved the way for your joke." I did this. Only when I came out from between the hedges round the village gardens and was about to go into the meadows, some country people came along the footpath, which was rather awkward. I thought it best to turn aside into a little wood on a hill nearby, to hide there until it was time. But how strangely moved I was when I went into the wood: for there was a little clearing with benches, from which one had a delightful view out across the countryside. There below me was the village, with its church steeple, then Drusenheim, and beyond it the wooded islands in the Rhine; away on the other side were the Vosges mountains, and Strasbourg Minster, too. Each of these sky-bright pictures was set in a leafy frame. Nothing could be more charming and delightful. I sat down on one of the benches and noticed a narrow little board on the mightiest tree, with the inscription: "Friederike's Repose." It did not occur to me that I might have come only to disturb this repose; for the delightful thing about falling in love is that just as one does not know how it begins, so too one does not think of how it will end, and, feeling all gladness and gaiety, one has no forebodings of any grief one may be about to cause.

I had only just had time to look round, and was losing myself in delicious day-dreams, when I heard someone coming. It was Friederike herself. "George, what are you doing here?" she called from some way off. "Not George," I exclaimed, running towards her, "but someone who offers you a thousand apologies." She looked at me in astonishment



for a moment, but got over it almost at once, drew a deep breath and said: "You horrid person, what a fright you gave me!" "The first disguise drove me into the second," I exclaimed. "The first would have been unforgivable if I had had any idea to whom I was going. And this one I am sure you will forgive, for you are always kindness itself to the peasants." Her pale cheeks had flushed a lovely rosy red. "At least," she said, "we shall not treat you worse than George. But let us sit down. I must confess I am a little shaken by the fright you gave me." I sat down beside her, in a whirl of emotion. "Your friend has told us the whole story up to early this morning," she said. "Now tell me the rest." Without losing a moment I described how horrified I had been at the figure I had cut yesterday and how I had gone storming out of the house, and I made it sound so funny that she burst out into peals of laughter. Then I went on with the rest of it, describing my feelings with restraint and yet passionately enough for it to have passed for a declaration of love wrapped up as a story, and finally expressed my joy at being with her again by kissing her hand, which she then let lie in both of mine. Last night on our moonlit walk she had done all the talking; now it was my turn and I made up for my previous silence. The pleasure of being with her again and being able to say everything that I had not said the day before was so intense that in my eloquence I failed to notice that she herself had gradually become silent and thoughtful. She sighed deeply several times, and I apologised over and over again for the fright I had given her. I do not know how long we sat there. But suddenly we heard someone calling: "Riekchen! Riekchen!" It was her sister's voice. "Now we shall have fun," Friederike said, quite her cheerful self again. "She is coming up on my side," she added, bending forward so as to conceal me partly. "Turn your head away, so that she does not recognise you at once."

Then her sister came into the clearing, not alone, but with Weyland. And when they caught sight of us, both of them stopped as though petrified.

Not even the sight of a huge flame bursting out of a peaceful roof, not even meeting a monster both loathsome and terrifying in its hideousness, could strike us with such grim dismay as seizes us when we suddenly find ourselves confronted with something which we would have thought morally impossible. "What does this mean?" Friederike's sister exclaimed abruptly, shocked. "What is this? You sitting with George? Hand in hand? What am I to make of it?"

"Dear sister," Friederike replied gravely, "this poor fellow has been asking my forgiveness and he wants to ask yours too, but you must grant it to him beforehand."

"I don't understand, I can't understand," the sister said, shaking her head and looking at Weyland, who just stood there in his quiet way, watching the scene, without saying anything.

Friederike stood up and pulled me after her. "No hesitating!" she exclaimed. "Pardon asked and pardon granted!" "Yes, indeed!" I said, going quite close to the elder sister. "I badly need your pardon."

She started back with a scream, turning very red. But then she threw herself on the grass, laughing wildly, as though she would never stop. Weyland smiled contentedly and exclaimed: "You're a tremendous fellow!" Then he shook me by the hand. He was usually not very demonstrative, but now, although still restrained, he did put something warm and stimulating into this handshake.

After collecting ourselves and calming down somewhat, we started back towards the village. On the way I discovered how this quaint encounter had occurred. Friederike had separated from the others at the end of their walk, to go and sit quietly for a while before dinner in her usual resting-place in the clearing, and when the other two had reached home, the mother had sent them out to fetch Friederike quickly, because dinner was ready.

The elder sister was in a hilarious mood and, when she heard that her mother had discovered the secret already, she exclaimed: "Then all that remains to be done is to trick my

father and brother, the manservant and the maid." When we reached the hedge at the bottom of the garden, it was agreed that Friederike should go ahead with Weyland. The maid was busy in the kitchen-garden, and Olivia (as I shall name the elder sister) called out to her: "Just a moment, I have something to say to you." She left me standing by the hedge and went over to the maid. I saw them talking very earnestly. Olivia was telling her that George had quarrelled with his Barbara and seemed inclined to marry her. The girl was quite taken with this idea, so I was called over to confirm what had been said. The pretty little country lass looked down at the ground until I was quite close to her. But when she suddenly looked up and saw a strange face, she screamed loudly, as Olivia had done, and ran away. Olivia told me to run after her and stop her from going into the house and making a fuss; she herself, she said, would go in and see what her father was doing. On the way in, Olivia met with the manservant, who was in love with the maid; in the meantime, I had caught up with the girl and was holding her fast. "Just think! What luck!" Olivia called out. "It's all over with Barbara, and George is going to marry Liese." "That's just what I've been expecting," the lad said, stopping with a sombre look.

I had got the maid to understand that all we wanted was to play a trick on the pastor. We went up to the lad, who turned his back on us and began to walk off. But Liese caught up with him and made him look at me, whereupon he struck the most extraordinary attitudes of amazement.

We went into the house together. The table was laid and the pastor was already in the room. Olivia stopped in the doorway, keeping me behind her, and said: "Father, you will not mind if George has dinner with us, will you? But you must allow him to keep his hat on." "I have no objection," the old man said. "But why such an odd thing? Has he been hurt?" She pulled me in, just as I was, with my hat on. "No," she said, bringing me into the room, "but he has a bird's nest under it and they might fly out and get every-

thing into a scramble. They're all quite crazy birds, you see." Her father took the joke in the right spirit, without quite knowing what it all meant. At this instant she took my hat off, bowed and scraped, and made me do the same. The old man looked at me and recognised me, but did not lose his clerical calm "Ah, our friend the theological student!" he exclaimed, wagging his finger at me. "You changed saddles very fast. And so overnight I lost a curate, who only yesterday promised me so faithfully that he would sometimes preach for me on weekdays." Then he laughed heartily and bade me welcome, and we sat down to dinner.

Moses came in a good deal later; for, being the spoilt baby, he made a habit of not hearing the dinner-bell. Nor did he take much notice of the rest of the company, even when contradicting them. In order to make more sure of him, I had not been put between the sisters, but at the bottom of the table, where George sometimes sat. Coming in through the door behind me, he gave me a hearty slap on the back, and said: "Hello, George, enjoying your dinner?" "Thank you kindly, young sir," I answered. He was startled by the strange voice and the strange face. "Don't you think," Olivia exclaimed, "that he is very like his brother?" "Oh, yes, from behind," Moses said, already quite sure of himself again. "So is everybody." He did not look at me again, merely applying himself to bolting down helpings of the courses he had missed. Then he got up and went outside to do some job in the garden or yard. During dessert the real George came in and made things livelier than ever. They tried to tease him about his jealousy, telling him that he should not have provided himself with a rival in me; but he was calm and quick enough to be a match for them, mixing up himself, his sweetheart, his double and the young ladies in such a topsy-turvy manner, with a kind of half-witted, sleepy air, that in the end nobody knew whom he was talking about, and we were only too glad to leave him alone with a glass of wine and a slice of his own cake.

After dinner it was suggested that we should go for a walk,

but I could not very well go out with them in my peasant costume. However, the girls had already had an idea early that morning, when they were told who it was who had been in such a hurry to run away: they had remembered that hanging in a cupboard there was a very smart laced coat (of the kind students wore then) belonging to a cousin who sometimes wore it here, out hunting. I refused it, making some little jokes for the sake of appearances, but really out of a sense of vanity, not wanting to destroy the good impression I had made as a peasant by now appearing as the cousin. The father had gone off to have his after-dinner nap, and the mother was busy with her housekeeping, as usual. Weyland then made the suggestion that I should tell them a story. I agreed at once. We went into a large arbour and I told them a fairy-tale which I later put into writing, with the title *The New Melusina*. It stands in about the same relation to *The New Paris*\* as a very young man does to a boy, and I would include it here, if I were not afraid that quaint flights of fancy might spoil the atmosphere of simple countrified reality that surrounds us. Anyway, I succeeded in achieving what always rewards the inventor and teller of tales: I aroused my hearers' curiosity, held their attention, provoked them into trying to guess the answers to the mysteries, baffled their expectations by capping one fabulous scene with another still more fabulous, aroused their sympathy and fear, kept them in suspense and played on their emotions, finally calming them down by transforming an apparently serious subject into a light-hearted witticism, and leaving the imagination enriched with new images and the intellect with new ideas.

Should anyone who chanced to read that tale in print today doubt whether it could really produce such an effect, I would ask him to bear in mind that man is only meant to act in and upon the present. Writing is a misuse of language; reading to oneself is a miserable substitute for talking. Man only influences others through his personality, and what

\* The fairy-tale put into the mouth of the young Goethe, and already referred to. *The New Melusina* appears in *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*.

influences youth most intensely is youth; this is the source of the purest and most intense reactions, which keep the world alive both morally and physically. From my father I had inherited a rather schoolmasterly kind of talkativeness; from my mother I had the gift of clear and vigorous imaginative expression, so that I could brighten up old stories or tell new ones, even making them up as I went along. My father's gift was apt to make me somewhat tiresome in company—for who wants to hear somebody else's views and opinions, particularly those of a very young man whose lack of experience makes it seem impossible for him to have good judgment? My mother, on the other hand, had equipped me very well for social intercourse. Even the most meaningless tale sets the imagination working, and the intellect will gratefully accept even the thinnest subject-matter.

Such story-telling, which was no effort to me, made me popular with children, excited and delighted young people and drew my elders' attention to me. However, in society—such as most society is—I soon had to give up these entertainments, and as a result I have lost a good deal of enjoyment in life, as well as intellectual exercise. Yet these two parental gifts have gone all through life with me, linked with a third: the need to express myself in similes and figures of speech. It was in recognition of these talents that the penetrating but one-sided Dr. Gall declared that I was actually a born demagogue. This piece of information somewhat dismayed me, for, if his diagnosis had been accurate, I would have been a failure in any other profession, being gifted for nothing but the very thing that is superfluous here, as there is nothing to make speeches about in Germany.

## FRIEDERIKE

AFTER I had finished my story in that arbour at Sesenheim, gracefully spicing everyday things with the impossible, I found that my audience, who had been showing the greatest interest, were utterly enchanted. They implored me to write the story down for them, so that they could read it over again to themselves and to other people. This I promised all the more gladly, as I hoped to make it an excuse for paying another visit and so getting to know them better. The party broke up for a moment, perhaps all of us feeling that after such a lively day the evening might be slightly dull. I was therefore relieved when Weyland immediately said goodbye on behalf of us both, with the excuse that he, as a hard-working and conscientious student, wanted to spend the night in Drusenheim in order to be back in Strasbourg early the next morning.

We were both silent all the way to the inn, I because I felt myself drawn back as though by a hook sticking in my heart, and he because he was turning over in his mind something which he told me about the moment we arrived. "It's a queer thing," he began, "that you lit on just that story. Didn't you notice that it made quite an unusual impression?" "Of course," I replied, "I couldn't fail to see that in some places Olivia laughed more than was really necessary, Friederike shook her head, you all exchanged meaning glances, and you yourself seemed to be taken aback. I must confess it almost put me off. For it occurred to me that perhaps it was not in very good taste to tell those good little girls such doubtful oddities, which it might be better for them not to know, and give them such a poor opinion of men as they must inevitably form from the figure of the adventurer." "Not at all!" he said. "You haven't guessed—and how could you? The good little girls are by no means so ignorant of such things as you

believe, for in their large circle of friends they find many things to give them food for thought. For instance, on the other side of the Rhine there is a married couple just like the one you described in your exaggerated and romantic way—he just as tall, coarse and blunt and she just as slight and frail, so that he could almost carry her in one hand. Everything about their relationship and their story fits into your tale so exactly that the girls asked me in all seriousness whether you knew the people and had described them for the fun of it. I assured them it was not so, but you will be wise to leave the story unwritten. We'll put it off for one reason and another until we've thought of an excuse."

I was very surprised, for I had not been thinking of any real couple either this side or the other side of the Rhine, and I could not even have said where I got the idea from. I liked spinning such stories in my head, without reference to reality, and it seemed to me that when I told them, my listeners should take them in the same spirit.

When I was back in town and had taken up my usual work, I felt the strain of it more than ever before; for the naturally active person tends to make too many plans and overload himself with work. All goes well until some physical or moral obstacle gets in his way and reveals the disproportion between his strength and his intentions.

I worked at law as hard as was necessary to have no difficulty in getting my degree. I was attracted to medicine because it revealed the many aspects of nature or at least made me aware of them, and I had become familiar with it through various people I mixed with. I also had to give some time and attention to society, for several families had done a great deal for me. But it would have been quite possible to do all this if I had not been overburdened by what Herder demanded of me. He had torn away the curtain hiding the poverty of German literature from me; he had cruelly destroyed many of my prejudices; only a few stars of the first magnitude were left in the national literary firmament, and all the rest he regarded merely as meteorites; and he had



belittled what I hoped and felt about my future, until I almost despaired of my own abilities. But at the same time he swept me along with him, along that glorious broad road which he himself was travelling, pointing out to me his favourite writers, among whom Swift and Hamann took the first place, and shook me up even more forcefully than he had at first humbled me. To all these entanglements there now came the fact that I seemed to be falling passionately in love, which might divert my attention from these problems but could hardly raise me above them. On top of this I had a physical ailment, a contraction of my throat after meals, which I did not get rid of until some time later, by the simple expedient of giving up a certain red wine which we generally drank and enjoyed in the house where I dined. I had not suffered from this unbearable discomfort in Sesenheim, which made me twice as pleased to be there; but when I returned to my town diet, to my great annoyance it recurred almost immediately. All this meant that I was moping and glum, and my appearance was probably in keeping with my state of mind.

More disgruntled than ever, because this trouble had been particularly bad after dinner, I went to join the students "walking the hospital." The great cheerfulness and geniality with which our respected professor conducted us from bed to bed, his exact description of significant symptoms, his judgement of the development of the disease as a whole, the exquisite Hippocratic method by which he made us learn directly from experience, without resorting to theory, and his way of summing up at the end of his lecture—all this drew me to him and made an unfamiliar subject, which I only glimpsed as though through a keyhole, all the more attractive. I gradually lost my abhorrence of the sick people the more I learnt to translate their condition into medical terms, which made it easier to imagine a cure and the resurrection of the body and mind. I dare say that he noticed me particularly, as an outsider, and forgave me the eccentricity that brought me to his lectures. This time, instead of winding up his lecture with a dictum applying to some particular disease

under observation, he said jovially: "Well, gentlemen, we have the vacation ahead of us. Make use of it to freshen yourselves up. You should work hard and conscientiously, of course, but your studies should also be approached cheerfully and with a fresh and open mind. Take plenty of exercise, walk and ride through the beautiful countryside. Those of you who were born here will enjoy familiar sights, and strangers will receive new impressions and have a pleasant memory for the future."

There were actually only two of us for whom this advice could be meant. I hope that the other one made as good use of it as I did! It came to me like a voice from heaven, and I rushed off to order a horse and to turn myself out as smartly as possible. I sent for Weyland, but he was not to be found. This did not deter me, but unfortunately things went slowly and I did not get away as early as I had hoped. Although I rode hard, nightfall overtook me. The moon shone on my impassioned enterprise, and so I could not miss the way. The night was windy and uncannily cool, and I gave my horse his head, in order to see her before the next morning.

It was already late when I stabled my horse in Sesenheim. When I asked the innkeeper if he could still see a light in the parsonage, he told me that the ladies had only just gone home. He thought he had heard that they were expecting a visitor. I did not like that, for I had hoped to be the only one. I hurried along to get there first. I found the two sisters sitting outside the door. They did not seem very surprised, but I was, when Friederike whispered to Olivia, just loud enough for me to hear: "What did I tell you? Here he is!" They took me indoors, where a small supper was laid. Their mother welcomed me like an old acquaintance. But when Olivia saw me in the light she burst out into loud laughter; she was not much good at controlling herself.

After this first somewhat unusual reception, the conversation at once became free and jolly. But only next morning did I discover that Friederike had prophesied I would come. Everyone feels some satisfaction in seeing a premonition come

true, even a sad one. The fulfilment of any foreboding gives a person a heightened sense of his own importance, whether he believes himself so sensitive that he can tangibly feel something happening at a distance, or so sharp-witted that he perceives necessary connections between things as yet uncertain. The reason for Olivia's laughter also remained no secret: she confessed that she found it amusing to see me so smartly and correctly dressed this time. But Friederike preferred to attribute my elegance not to vanity but to the wish to make a good impression on her.

Early the next morning Friederike summoned me to go out for a walk with her. Her mother and sister were busy making preparations to receive a number of visitors. Walking along beside dear Friederike, I thought how lovely the early Sunday morning was here in the country, just as that delightful writer Hebel has made it come alive for us. She gave me a description of the visitors who were expected and asked me to help her in trying to make all the amusements as general and as well organised as possible. "Usually," she said, "everyone amuses himself in his own way. Round games are soon given up, and then there's nothing left but for some to take to cards and the others to dancing themselves giddy."

Accordingly we sketched out a plan of what was to be done before and after dinner, told each other about new parlour-games, and felt thoroughly happy and at home with each other. Then the bell summoned us to church, and sitting at her side I was not even bored by her father's rather uninspired sermon.

Time always passes quickly in the company of a woman one loves. But I also had a number of things to think about during this hour. I went over the good qualities that she had just been displaying so frankly: her mild cheerfulness, her combination of naivety and self-confidence, her blithe optimism mingled with shrewdness—qualities that might seem incompatible, but which were combined in her, underlining the attractiveness of her appearance. However, I also had more

serious things to think about as regards myself, which tended to make me less completely happy.

Since that excitable girl had cursed and sanctified my lips (after all, every consecration involves both), I had been superstitiously careful not to kiss any girl, because I was afraid of doing some unheard-of spiritual harm. So I controlled all sensual desire of the kind that drives a young man to gain this favour, which can mean so much or so little, from a charming girl. But in this regard I was confronted with severe ordeals even in the most respectable company. All those more or less amusing little games that help to make everyone feel at home and to keep things going in a gay, youthful party are mostly based on a system of forfeits, in which kissing plays a not inconsiderable part. Now I had made up my mind, once and for all, not to kiss anyone; and just as a deficiency or an obstacle spurs us on to activity for which we might otherwise have little inclination, I exerted all my ingenious and humorous talents in order to wriggle out of the predicament, and to do it in such a way as to gain rather than lose in everyone else's eyes and also make the party more rather than less of a success. If a rhyme was called for to redeem a forfeit, I was the person generally called upon. I saw to it that I was always prepared with something in praise of our hostess or whichever of the young ladies had been nicest to me. If it happened that a kiss was imposed, then I did what I could to make an excuse that satisfied everyone; and as I had had time enough to think it out beforehand, I had a good store of little compliments handy. And yet those invented on the spur of the moment were always the best.

When we reached the house, the guests, who had come from various directions, were already buzzing about merrily; then Friederike collected them and took them out for a walk to that pretty clearing where we had been before. There a splendid picnic had been prepared. It was decided to play games until midday. In this case, in agreement with Friederike—who, of course, had no idea of my secret—I was able to

see that games were played without forfeits or the forfeits not paid for with kisses.

My adroitness was all the more necessary as the visitors, though all strangers to me, soon seemed to suspect there was something between me and Friederike and roguishly did everything they could to force me into doing the very thing I was secretly trying to avoid. For in such circles, when it is suspected that two young people are falling in love, people try to make them embarrassed or to throw them together more, just as later, when they have become engaged, there is an obvious effort to keep them apart. It is a matter of indifference to sociable people whether they do good or harm, so long as they are kept amused.

It needed no special powers of observation that morning for me to get a lasting picture of Friederike's whole personality. Even the peasants' friendly greetings, mainly addressed to her, made it plain that they felt her goodness of heart and liked her for it. At home it was the elder sister who helped their mother, for Friederike was never asked to do anything demanding physical effort; she was treated with special consideration, on account, they said, of her weak chest.

Some women are particularly attractive indoors, others appeal more in the open air; and Friederike belonged to the latter. Her whole appearance and personality were never more charming than when she was walking along a little track uphill; the grace of her movements and the blithe radiance of her face vied with the flowery earth and the blue sky. And she seemed to bring back home with her some of this refreshing open air; I noticed before long that she had the gift of smoothing out difficulties and conjuring away little embarrassments.

The purest joy one can have from a woman one loves is that of seeing how delightful she is to others. Friederike's charm was a beneficial influence on the company. When out walking she fluttered to and fro, an animating spirit who knew how to fill gaps as they might occur here and there. It was sheer joy to see the lightness of her movements, and most of

all when she ran. Just as the deer seems to be nearest to its own perfection when it bounds lightly over the young corn, so she seemed to give her whole being its most natural expression when she went running lightly over meadows and pastures to fetch something forgotten, to look for something lost, to call a straying couple, or give a message. Whatever she did, she was never out of breath and never flustered; all this made her parents' great anxiety about her health seem somewhat exaggerated.

Her father, who sometimes walked through the fields with us, was often unlucky in his companion. So I would join him, and he never missed an opportunity to talk at length on his favourite subject, the proposed rebuilding of the parsonage. He complained particularly that he had not been able to get the carefully-drawn plans back to think them over and consider various improvements. To this I said it would be easy to replace them, and offered to draw up a ground-plan, which was, after all, the first thing. He was thoroughly pleased and said the schoolmaster should lend a hand with the surveying; he then hurried off at once to stir him up, so that he should be there in the morning with the yardstick and tape-measure.

When he had gone, Friederike said: "It is very good of you to indulge my father's weakness. The others, who are tired of it, avoid him or change the subject. By the way, I must confess that the rest of us do not want the rebuilding; it would be too expensive for the parish and for us, too. A new house means new furnishing. Our visitors would not be any more comfortable; they are quite used to the old house. Here we can afford to look after them properly; there, with a big place to keep up, we would find things difficult. This is how matters stand. But all the same, don't stop being agreeable to him about it. I am deeply grateful to you."

Another girl joined us, mentioning various novels and asking whether Friederike had read them. She said she had not. She had read very little altogether, having grown up in the healthy, innocent enjoyment of simple things. I was on the point of mentioning *The Vicar of Wakefield*, but hesitated

to offer it to her, because there was such an obvious and fundamental similarity in the circumstances. "I enjoy reading novels," she said. "One gets to know such nice people, whom one would like to resemble"

The measuring-up of the house took place the next morning. It was rather slow work, as neither I nor the schoolmaster was skilled in such arts. Finally a tolerable sketch was produced. The good pastor told me his intentions and was quite satisfied when I took my leave to go back to the town and draw up the actual plan at my ease. Friederike said goodbye to me light-heartedly; she was as sure of my affection as I was of hers, and the six leagues between us no longer seemed so far. It was quite easy to travel to Drusenheim by coach and also to use this means of transport, as well as the mail and special messengers such as George, for an exchange of messages.

Once arrived in town, I worked at the plan from early in the morning; there could be no more question of sleeping late. I drew it as neatly as possible. Meanwhile I had sent her some books, together with a short, friendly note. I received an answer immediately and was delighted with her pretty, light, sincere handwriting. Both her style and what she said were natural, warm and affectionate, coming from the heart; and this heightened and intensified the lovely impression she had made on me. I never grew tired of going over the charming qualities of her sweet personality in my imagination, cheered by the hope of soon seeing her again and for a much longer time.

There was now no more need of any encouragement from the excellent professor of medicine. Those opportune words of his had so thoroughly cured me that I felt little inclination to see him and his patients again for some time. My correspondence with Friederike became more intense. She invited me to a party to which friends from the other side of the Rhine were also coming; I was to prepare for a longer stay. I did this by heaving a voluminous portmanteau up on to the coach; and in a few hours I was at her side. I found a large,

jolly gathering, but I took the pastor aside and handed him the plan, with which he was greatly delighted. I discussed with him what I had thought while I was working it out; he was overjoyed, and particularly praised the clean drawing. It was a thing I had practised since childhood, and this time I had gone to extra trouble, using the most beautiful paper. However, our good host's delight was soon diminished when, against my advice, in his heartfelt joy he passed the plan round among the company. Far from being as sympathetic as he wished, some of them took no notice at all of this exquisite piece of work, and others, who thought they knew something about such things, made matters still worse by criticising the plan as *inexpert*. And while the old man's attention was distracted for a moment, they treated these immaculate drawings like rough sketches, and one of them drew in his suggested corrections with a hard pencil, pressing it on the delicate paper so that there was no possibility of ever restoring its original purity.

I found it almost impossible to comfort the old man, who was most disgruntled at seeing his toy so shamefully spoilt, although I assured him that I myself had only regarded those pages as sketches for discussion and had meant to base new drawings on them. In spite of all this, he walked off in great annoyance. Friederike thanked me for the trouble I had taken with her father's hobby and for my patience with the bad behaviour of the other guests.

But in her company I was beyond feeling any disappointment or annoyance. The party consisted of young, rather noisy friends and one old gentleman who tried to out-do them, behaving even more oddly than they did. The wine had flowed freely even at luncheon, at the bountifully spread dinner-table everybody did very well, having got up a good appetite during the strenuous exercise in the warm weather. And if the old town clerk overdid his enjoyment of the good things, the younger people certainly did their best to keep up with him.

I was boundlessly happy at Friederike's side: talkative, gay,



witty and bold, and yet kept in check by my feelings of respect and devotion for her. She too was frank, blithe, sympathetic and communicative. We seemed to be entertaining the whole party, but really we were only concerned with each other.

After dinner we all went out to sit in the shade, playing games, and now it was the time for forfeits. In the redeeming of these forfeits the whole style of behaviour became more and more exaggerated: the gestures that one was expected to make, the actions that were demanded, the tasks that had to be carried out, all this showed a daring gaiety that knew no limits. I myself intensified this wild fun by producing many comic ideas, and Friederike shone with many little bits of mischief. She seemed lovelier than ever. All my hypochondriac, superstitious notions had vanished, and when the opportunity arose to kiss the girl I loved so fondly, I took it—and missed no opportunity of doing so again and again, to my heart's content.

The general hope of having some music was at last fulfilled, and everybody hurried off to dance. Allemandes and waltzing were the beginning, the middle and the end of it. Everybody had grown up with these national dances; I, too, did credit to my private dancing-mistresses, and Friederike, who danced as lightly as she walked, jumped and ran, was delighted to find me a skilful partner. Most of the time we danced together, but after a while we had to break off, as everybody urged her not to go on spinning round so wildly. We made up for it by going for a solitary walk hand in hand, and when we came to that quiet clearing, there was a fervent embrace and we exchanged impassioned declarations of the deepest love.

Older people who had got up from the card-table drew us away with them, and at supper, too, there was no chance to be together. Dancing went on until late into the night, and there was much drinking of toasts and so on, just as at midday.

I had been sound asleep for only a few hours when I was wakened by the tumult of my hot blood. It is at such times

and in such situations that care and remorse generally overwhelm the man lying defenceless, unable to sleep. My imagination at once began to show me the most lifelike scenes: I saw Lucinde letting go of me with a passionate movement after that violent kiss, stepping back, her cheeks glowing and her eyes sparkling, and uttering the curse which, although it was aimed at her sister, actually—without her knowing it—menaced others who were innocent. I saw Friederike facing her, rigid with horror, pale, suffering the effects of that curse of which she knew nothing. I was between them both, as incapable of warding off the spiritual influences of that adventure as of undoing that kiss which boded misfortune. Friederike's frail health seemed to make the threatened disaster all the likelier, and now her love seemed doomed. I wished I were a hundred miles away.

But I cannot deny that there was something else in the background which I found still more painful. It was really conceit which had kept that superstition alive in my mind: my lips—sanctified or cursed, as the case might be—then seemed more significant than ever before and I was most complacently aware of my ascetic behaviour in denying myself many an innocent pleasure, partly in order to keep myself magically different, and partly in order not to injure some harmless girl.

But now it was all lost, past recall. I had returned to an ordinary state: and I believed I had injured the girl I loved, permanently harming her. And so, instead of getting rid of the curse, I had only turned it from my lips into my own heart.

All this raged in my blood, which was excited by love and passion, wine and dancing; and my thoughts were so confused, my emotions so tormented, that in contrast to the comfortable happiness of the day before I felt sunk in limitless despair. Fortunately, daylight peered through a chink in the shutters and the rising sun came out to vanquish the powers of the night and get me on to my feet again. I was soon out of doors and feeling much fresher, even quite restored.

Like many other notions, superstition very easily loses something of its influence when, instead of flattering our delicate vanity, it gets in its way and tries to give it a bad time. It is always quite obvious then that we can get rid of superstition if we only try to; and we give it up all the more easily the more everything we rescue from it turns out to our advantage. The sight of Friederike, the feeling of her love, and the general cheerfulness all around, all this reproached me, in these happy days, for harbouring the night's birds of ill omen, and I thought I had scared them off once and for all. I grew more and more light-hearted as she, dear girl, treated me more familiarly and confidentially; and I was really happy when this time, as we all said goodbye, she not only kissed the friends and relatives, but me, too—for all to see.

In town there were a great many things waiting for me, work and amusements, from which I often withdrew to collect my thoughts and concentrate them on my beloved, with whom I had begun a regular correspondence. Even in her letters she was always the same. Whether she was telling me some news or making allusions to things I knew of, sketching a description or musing for a moment, it was always as though even with her pen, coming and going, running, jumping, her step was as light as it was sure. I very much enjoyed writing to her, too. For thinking of how good and lovely she was increased my affection for her even in absence, so that this correspondence was nearly as vivid as personal contact; indeed, later I even valued it and enjoyed it more.

Yes, that superstition about the kiss had vanished completely. Although it was based on the impressions of earlier years, yet the spirit of the times, contact with cool, sensible men, and the speed with which one lives when young had all worked against it. It would have been difficult to find anybody among my acquaintances who would not have regarded my whim, had I confessed it, as utterly ridiculous. Only the worst of it was that although the obsession left me, I now had to consider seriously the state in which young men always

find themselves when they cannot follow up a premature love affair with a promise to make it into something permanent. It was all very well being rid of an hallucination; but now my reason and commonsense gave me an even worse time. My passion for Friederike grew the more I got to know her excellent character; and the time was coming nearer when I was to lose the dear, good girl, perhaps for ever.

We had gone on for a long time, living in a quiet, pleasant atmosphere, when my friend Weyland was mischievous enough to bring along a copy of *The Vicar of Wakefield* to Sesenheim and, when there was talk of someone reading aloud, to hand it to me quite unexpectedly and in the most casual manner. I was able to control myself, and read as cheerfully and expressively as I could. My listeners' faces brightened at once, and they seemed to find it far from unpleasant to be confronted with another comparison. Just as they had found amusing counterparts to Raymond and Melusina, so here they saw themselves mirrored in quite a flattering manner. It was not openly admitted, but neither was it denied, that the characters in the book were intellectual and emotional affinities.

All people of the right sort, as their education proceeds, feel that they have a double part to play in this world, a real one and an ideal one; and this feeling is the source of every urge to higher things. We realise all too sharply what our real part in life is; but as regards the other part, we seldom manage to get a clear picture of it. Man may seek his higher destiny on earth or in heaven, in the present or the future, but the result is only that he is the victim of a perpetual inner uncertainty and constant interferences from outside, until he makes up his mind once and for all that his standard of what is right is what accords with his own needs.

Of all ways of trying to develop one's self into something higher or set one's self on a level with something higher, one of the most permissible is probably the youthful urge to compare one's self with characters in novels. It is extremely innocent and, however it may be denounced, extremely harm-

less. It keeps us interested at times when we would otherwise die of boredom or resort to some more passionate amusement.

How often one hears people bewailing the damage novels do. But what harm does it do if some nice girl or handsome young man pictures herself or himself as a person who is either better or worse off than they are? Is ordinary middle-class life of such great value? Or do the demands of everyday life so absorb people that they should deny themselves the demands of something more ideally beautiful?

This is undoubtedly the way we should regard the historical and poetical names given at baptism, names that have been infiltrating into the German church, displacing the sacred names, often to the annoyance of the officiating clergy; so the romantic and poetic fictions branch out into everyday life. This urge to ennoble one's child by giving him a name with a good ring to it, even if that is the only reason for giving it, is praiseworthy; and this link between reality and an imaginary world casts a pleasant glimmer, too, over the whole life of the person concerned. We would think it an insult to the pretty child whom it is a pleasure to call Bertha if we called her Urselblandine. Certainly every well-brought-up person, not to speak of a lover, would find difficulty in pronouncing such a name. One cannot blame the world, cold and one-sided as it is in its judgments, if it regards everything at all imaginative as ludicrous and objectionable; but thinking people with an understanding of human nature will be able to appreciate such things for what they are worth.

The comparison that the mischievous Weyland had forced on us had very pleasing consequences for the lovers on the fair banks of the Rhine. One does not think about oneself while looking at oneself in the mirror; but one feels a heightened sense of one's own personality. And it is the same with those moral counterparts in which one recognises one's own manners and tastes, habits and peculiarities, as in a silhouette, and which one longs to take hold of and embrace with brotherly affection.

It became more and more firmly established that we should

always be together; it was now quite taken for granted that I was one of the family friends. Nobody interfered in any way; nobody asked what was to come of it. And what parents are not sometimes compelled to let their daughters and sons have their own way for a while, in such a floating state of uncertainty, until some trifle settles the thing for life, better than a long-prepared plan could have done it?

Friederike's family had confidence in her proper feeling and in my correct behaviour: this all the more on account of my strange abstemiousness in the matter of even innocent caresses. We were left unchaperoned, as was the general custom in that part of the country at that time, and it was left to us whether we liked to join smaller or larger parties rambling through the countryside and visiting friends in the neighbourhood. Scattered in various places on this and the other side of the Rhine, in Hagenau, Fort Louis, Philippsburg, and the Ortenau, I met the people who had been gathered together at Sesenheim, each now in his own house, each a kindly host, hospitably glad to throw open kitchen and cellar, gardens and vineyards, and make us at home in the whole place. On our boating trips we often went out to the islands in the Rhine. There we cooked the chilly fish out of the Rhine's clear water, ruthlessly plunging them into the pot, on to the spit or into boiling fat; and here in the snug fisher-cabins we might perhaps have settled down for longer than was suitable if the abominable gnats that haunt the Rhine had not driven us away again after a few hours. It was this unbearable disturbance of one of our most delightful expeditions—on which everything else went well and we two felt happier than ever—which brought us home too early, at a time when we were in the way, and made me burst out into blasphemous denunciations in the good old pastor's presence and declare these midges alone were enough to stop me from believing that a good and wise God had created the world. The pious old gentleman called me to order quite sternly and informed me that these midges and other plagues had only come into existence after the fall of our first parents or, if

there had been any of them in Paradise, there they had only buzzed pleasantly, without stinging I felt in a better temper at once; for an angry man can easily be appeased if something can make him smile. But I assured him that there had been no need for the angel with the flaming sword to drive the sinful couple out of the garden, and he must permit me to think it had been done by enormous midges from the Tigris and Euphrates And so it was my turn to make him laugh; for this excellent man could take a joke or at least let one pass.

The enjoyment of the changing days and seasons in this glorious countryside, however, was solemn and sublime. One only had to live entirely for the present side by side with the beloved, or near her, in order to feel the full clarity of the pure sky, the radiance of the fruitful earth, and those mild evenings and warm nights. For months we were enchanted with clear, ethereal mornings when the sky put forth all its brilliance and the earth was drenched with abundant dew; and lest the pageant should become monotonous, clouds often towered up over the remote hills, sometimes in one, sometimes in another quarter of the sky. They hovered there for days and even weeks without dimming the clear sky, and even the passing thunderstorms quickened the earth and made the green more brilliant as it glistened in the sunshine, not yet quite dry. The double rainbow, those two-coloured fringes of a dark grey, almost black streak across the sky were more glorious, brighter and more definite, but also more fleeting than I had observed anywhere else.

In these surroundings I was suddenly overcome by the impulse to write, which I had not felt for a long time. I wrote Friederike many songs to well-known melodies. They would have made a pretty little book. Few of them have survived; it should not be difficult to pick them out from among my other poems

However, as I was forced to go back to town frequently on account of my weird studies and other affairs, the result was a new form of life for us, one that saved our love from being

clouded by any of those annoying consequences usually attached to such little love-affairs. Away from me, she worked for me and thought of new kinds of amusement for when I came back; away from her, I gave my mind to her, in order always to be new to her, with a new gift or a new idea. Painted ribbons had just come into fashion, so I painted her some and sent them to her with a little poem, at a time when I had to remain away longer than I had expected. And in order to do even better than I had promised her father, instead of doing it myself I talked a young architect into working out a new and elaborate plan. This young man was as eager to draw up the plan as to oblige me and was further encouraged by the hope of being well received in such a pleasant family. He drew up a ground-plan, front elevation, and section of the house, not forgetting the yard and garden and adding a detailed but very modest estimate, to give the illusion that it would be easy to carry out such an extensive and costly undertaking.

This proof of our friendly endeavours earned us a most affectionate welcome; and when the good old gentleman saw that we were only too happy to be of service to him, he came out with yet another wish, namely to see his chaise, which was pretty but only painted in one colour, adorned with flowers and other ornamentation. As we fell in with this idea, paints, brushes and other necessities were fetched from the tradesmen and apothecaries in the towns round about. But as though a Wakefieldian mishap must not be lacking, we noticed only too late, when it was brightly painted all over, that we had used the wrong varnish and that it would not dry: neither sunshine nor wind, neither fine nor damp weather would do it any good. In the meantime, the family had to make use of an old rattletrap, and the only thing for us to do was to rub off the ornamentation with more trouble than we had had putting it on. The misery of this work was further increased by the girls, who implored us for heaven's sake to go slowly and carefully so as not to damage the original



paint, which, however, after this operation could not be restored to its primal splendour.

But such disagreeable little incidents did not disturb our happy life any more than was the case with Dr. Primrose and his lovable family; for many pleasant surprises occurred to us as well as to friends and neighbours: weddings and christenings, the erecting of a building, inheritances, a prize in a lottery—news of such things came and went and was enjoyed by all. We garnered all our joys in common, heightening them by dwelling on them with wit and affection. It was neither the first nor the last time that I associated with families and moved in social circles just in the moment of their full bloom; and if I may flatter myself that I contributed to the brilliance of such periods, I must also reproach myself for doing so, for precisely this is what makes such times hasten past so swiftly and vanish away.

But now our love had a strange ordeal to undergo. I call it an ordeal, although this is not the right word. This country family, with which I had become so intimate, was related to well-known and respected families of comfortable means in the town. The young townspeople were often in Sesenheim. Their elders, mothers and aunts, being less mobile, heard so much about the life out there, the growing charm of the daughters and even of my influence, that they wanted first to get to know me and, after I had visited them several times and been well received, demanded to see us all together, all the more as they felt they ought to repay their relatives' hospitality.

The matter was discussed from all points of view and at length. The mother found it difficult to part from her house-keeping, Olivia had a dislike of the town, into which she did not fit, and Friederike had no inclination for it. So the whole thing was drawn out until at last it was settled by the fact that I could not manage to go into the country for a fortnight; so that it was decided rather to be together in town under some stress than not to meet at all. And so I found the two girls—whom I was accustomed to seeing only against

a rural background, in a picture of swaying branches, running streams and meadows of nodding flowers, under a wide, free sky—for the first time now in the constraint of urban rooms, large enough, it is true, but limited by their wall-hangings, mirrors, clocks and china ornaments

One's relation to a loved person is so definite that surroundings do not matter much; but one's sensibility does insist that they should be the suitable, natural and customary surroundings. With my strong sense of the present I could not immediately adapt myself to the temporary contradiction here. The mother's well-bred, calm and noble manners were perfectly suitable in this circle; she was no different from the other ladies. Olivia, on the other hand, wriggled about like a fish on dry land. Just as she was used to calling out to me in the garden or beckoning me across a field whenever she had something in particular to say to me, so she did here too, drawing me into a window recess; she did it awkwardly, with embarrassment, obviously feeling that it was unsuitable, but she did it all the same. She had the most utterly trifling things to say to me, nothing that I did not know already: for instance, that she felt quite miserable and wished she were away by the Rhine, over the Rhine, or in remotest Turkey. Friederike, on the other hand, was quite remarkable in this situation. Properly speaking, she did not fit in either; but it spoke for her character that instead of adjusting herself to the circumstances she unconsciously modelled the circumstances to herself. She behaved in the same way that she did with company in the country. She made every moment come alive. Without causing any upheaval, she kept everything moving, which was just the way to make these people easy in their minds; for boredom is the only thing that causes such people any uneasiness. So she fulfilled her town aunts' wishes to perfection; for they, too, wanted to see something of the rural games and amusements they had heard of, without stirring from their sofas. When they had had their fill of this, the smart cousins' French dresses, jewellery and other things were taken out and unenviously admired. Nor did Friederike

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put herself out with me, but treated me just as usual. She seemed to give no sign of her preference except that she turned to me, rather than to anyone else, with her wishes and so acknowledged me as her servant.

She made a confident claim on these services one day, telling me that the ladies wished to hear me read. The daughters of the house had talked a great deal about it; for in Sesenheim I read whatever and whenever they liked. I was ready at once, only asking for some hours' quiet and attention. That was granted, and in one evening I read the whole of *Hamlet* through without interruption, interpreting the meaning of the play to the utmost of my ability and expressing myself as energetically and passionately as only a young man can. I earned great applause. Friederike had several times sighed deeply and flushed with excitement. These signs of a tender heart and inner emotion, with an outer appearance of cheerfulness and calm, were something I knew and the only reward I craved. Joyfully she let them thank her for having got me to read, in her own graceful manner accepting a little reflected glory.

This visit to town had not been intended to last long, but their departure was delayed. Friederike did her share in keeping the party entertained, and I did mine; but the springs that were unfailing in the country soon dried up in town, and things were all the worse because Olivia was gradually losing all self-control. The two sisters were the only people in the company who dressed in the old German style. It had never occurred to Friederike to dress any other way and she assumed she would pass anywhere like this; she did not compare herself with others. But Olivia thought it quite unbearable to be so noticeable, dressed like a milkmaid in this fashionable society. In the country she hardly noticed other women's town clothes and did not long for such things herself; but in town she could not endure the country style. All this—combined with all the other countless little things that make up a townswoman's life, in such completely different surroundings—for some days caused such havoc in her pas-

sionate soul that I had to concentrate all my powers of flattery on her in order to calm her down, as Friederike had asked me to. I was afraid of a furious scene. I could see the moment when she would fling herself down at my feet and implore me, by all I held sacred, to rescue her from this state of affairs. She was angelically good if she could have things her own way, but constraint of this kind immediately upset her and could even drive her to despair in the end. I now tried to hasten on what the mother as well as Olivia wished and Friederike did not object to. I could not help praising Friederike as a contrast to her sister, telling her how glad I was to find her unchanged in these surroundings and still as free as a bird among the branches. She answered very charmingly that, after all, I was there and that she was quite contented with any place when I was with her.

At last I saw them depart, and it was a weight off my mind. My feelings had been split between the two attitudes, Friederike's and Olivia's; I was not as frantically tormented as the one, but also by no means as tranquil as the other.

## THE FRENCH, SHAKESPEARE—AND LENZ. FAREWELL TO FRIEDERIKE

[*Goethe took his degree at Strasbourg, and considered a post in the German Chancellery at Versailles. But he and his friends felt some dislike for the French. French literature had grown old and genteel, and Voltaire with it. Rousseau was unacknowledged in Paris, and Diderot, in many ways sympathetic, had more German qualities than French.*]

AND then, too, I should like to recall a small but strangely epoch-making work—Rousseau's *Pygmalion*. A great deal might be said about it, for this strange production also hovers between nature and art in the mistaken attempt to absorb the latter in the former. Here we have an artist who has achieved work of great perfection and yet cannot be content to give his ideas artistic form, detaching them from his own personality and endowing them with higher life; quite the contrary, they too must be dragged down to his own earthly level. He sets out to destroy the loftiest works of mind and action, by the most banal sensuality.

All this and much else that influenced us,\* wise or foolish, true or half-true, contributed more than ever to the confusion in our minds. We roamed up many a path that led us a long way round or took us nowhere at all. So from many sides influences were at work to bring about that German literary revolution of which we were witnesses and to which we ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, were ceaselessly contributing.

Philosophic enlightenment and discipline were something to which we had neither urge nor inclination and we believed we had made ourselves rational on religious subjects; so the

\* Among Goethe's acquaintances at Strasbourg were a young Russian, called Pegelow, and Jung-Stilling, both disciples of Herder's, his two fellow-boarders, Engelbach and Weyland, and various other young men more or less closely concerned with the new literary movement, known as Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress).

French philosophers' violent quarrel with the clergy was a matter of little interest to us. Banned books, condemned to the flames, which were then causing a great stir, had no effect on us. I recall by way of example the *Système de la Nature*, by Baron d'Holbach, which we took up out of curiosity. We could not understand how such a book could be dangerous. It struck us so grey, so Cimmerian and so deathly that it was an effort for us to endure it; we shivered as though at the sight of a ghost. The author believes he is giving his book a quite special recommendation when he declares in the introduction that, being a very old man at the end of his days, already descending into the tomb, he wishes to reveal the truth to the world and posterity.

We laughed at him; for we seemed to have noticed that old people appreciate none of the things in the world that make it delightful and good to live in. "Old churches have dim windows!"—"It is children and sparrows you must ask about the taste of cherries and berries." Those were our banners and battle-cries. And so this book, being the sheer quintessence of doddering old age, seemed tasteless, even in bad taste. There was necessity, it declared, in everything, and therefore there was no God. But might there not (we asked) equally well be necessity for the existence of God? At the same time we did admit that we could not extricate ourselves from the necessities of days and nights, the seasons, climatic influences, and physical and physiological conditions; yet we felt something in ourselves that seemed to be a quite arbitrary freedom of will, and something else, too, that was trying to strike a balance with this freedom.

We could not give up the hope of becoming steadily more reasonable and making ourselves steadily more independent of external things and even of ourselves as well. The word "freedom" sounds so fine that one could not do without it, even though its meaning should be nothing but an illusion.

None of us had read the book right through, for we were disappointed in the expectation in which we had opened it. It heralded a system of nature, and so we really hoped to

find out something about nature, our idol Physics and chemistry, astronomy and geography, natural history and anatomy and much else of the same sort had for years now, down to this very day, been pointing always to the jewelled macrocosm, and we would have liked to hear of suns and stars, of planets and moons, of mountains, valleys, rivers and seas and of all that lives and moves and has its being therein, the tiny detail and the more general sweep of things. We did not doubt that in such a process much must be said that the average man might think harmful, the clergy dangerous and the State not permissible; and we hoped that this little book would turn out not unworthy of its ordeal by fire. But how hollow and empty we felt here in this dismal atheistic twilight where the earth and all its creation, the sky and all its stars, had disappeared. Matter was said to exist from all eternity and to be in motion from all eternity, bringing forth the infinite phenomena of life by nothing else but this motion to right and to left and in all directions. We would even have been content to put up with this if the author had really built up the world out of his matter in motion before our eyes. But apparently he knew as little about nature as we did, for having rammed in some general ideas he at once abandoned them in order to transform what seems higher than nature—or at least what manifests itself as a higher order of nature—into a ponderous material sort of nature which, though it had motion, had neither direction nor form, and he seemed to think that he had really achieved something by so doing.

But if this book did us any damage it was by making us thoroughly and permanently sick of all philosophy, and of metaphysics in particular. To make up for this we flung ourselves all the more impetuously and passionately on every sort of living knowledge, experience, action and creation

So here, then, on the borders of France, we had suddenly shed and shaken off any trace of French thought and attitudes. We found their way of life too clear-cut and sophisticated, their literature chilly, their criticism destructive, and

their philosophy abstruse and yet inadequate, so that we were on the point of surrendering ourselves to crude nature—at least by way of an experiment—and would have done so if another influence had not for a long time been preparing us for a higher, freer view of the world, as true as it was artistic, and for other intellectual pleasures, at first slowly and secretly and then more and more frankly and powerfully taking possession of our minds.

I hardly need to say that it is Shakespeare I speak of, and after I have uttered his name no further asseverations are needed. Shakespeare is more appreciated by the Germans than by any other nation, even perhaps including his own. We have lavished on him all the understanding, praise and indulgence that we deny each other; able men have taken trouble to present his intellectual virtues in the most favourable light; and I have always gladly added my voice to whatever has been said in praise of him, and even in making excuses for him. I have already spoken of the effect this extraordinary mind had upon me, and have written one or two things about his work that have met with public approval; and so perhaps this general statement here will do until I am in the position to publish a collection of reflections on his overwhelming importance, which I was almost tempted to put in here.

For the present I shall only sketch the way in which I came to know his work. This happened fairly early, in Leipzig, by way of Dodds' *Beauties of Shakespeare*. Whatever may be said against such collections, which introduce the author in snippets, they do undeniably do some good. After all, we are not always in such a settled state of mind that we can concentrate on taking in a whole work and appreciating its meaning. Do we not mark passages in a book that have a direct reference to ourselves? Young people in particular, whose education is not yet complete, are stimulated by brilliant passages. I still remember the time I spent with this book as one of the most sublime in my life. Those glorious idiosyncrasies, the great maxims, the striking descriptions, the



touches of humour, each and all of these things made a tremendous impact on me.

Then Wieland's translation appeared. It was devoured and then lent and recommended to all my friends. We Germans had the advantage of having several important foreign works transmitted to us in an easy, pleasant fashion. Shakespeare in prose translation, first by Wieland, and later by Eschenburg, being generally comprehensible and suited to the average reader, rapidly became popular and had great influence. I honour rhythm and rhyme, which are, after all, the making of poetry, but it is the profoundest, fundamental essence of a poet, the really formative and driving power in him, that is left over when he is translated into prose. What then remains is the sheer, perfect content, the thing that a dazzling style can trick us into believing is there when it is not or can hide when it is. Hence, I consider it wiser to bring young people up on prose translations rather than poetic ones; for it is noticeable that boys, who of course must turn everything into a source of amusement, revel in the sound of the words, the rolling of syllables, and destroy the profound meaning of the noblest works by treating them in a wanton spirit that is almost parody. So I think it is worth considering whether a prose translation of Homer should not be made; though, of course, it would have to be worthy of the level on which German literature stands today. I throw out all these suggestions for the consideration of our worthy educationists, who have the widest experience in such matters. There is only one thing I should like to mention in support of what I have said: Luther's translation of the Bible. For this remarkable man took a work written in the most various styles, with all the ring of voices poetic and historic, commanding and teaching, and gave it to us in our mother-tongue, as though all of one piece, by which he did more for religion than if he had tried to reproduce the peculiarities of the original in detail. Since that time futile attempts have been made with the Book of Job, the Psalms and other Biblical books, to make them appeal to us in their poetic form. For the broad masses,

for whom it is meant, a plain, simple translation is always the best. Those critical translations that compete with the original are really of no use except for the entertainment of the learned.

And so among our little group in Strasbourg the effect of Shakespeare—in translation and in the original, in fragments and as a whole, in extracts and quotations—was such that, just as one speaks of men who “know their Bible,” we gradually came to “know our Shakespeare,” in our talk building up a picture of his age, with all its virtues and vices as he had made them known to us, having the greatest fun with his quibbles and setting out to rival him with translations of them or even with original word-play of the same kind. What did a great deal to bring all this about was my taking him up with such tremendous enthusiasm. My own joyful acknowledgment of something higher floating above my reach infected my friends, who all threw themselves into the same way of thinking. We did not deny the possibility of coming to understand his greatness in more detail and developing a critical appreciation; but that we reserved for some time in the future; for the present we only wanted to enjoy him and follow his example with all our vigour, and not investigate and haggle about the man who was giving us so much pleasure; we preferred merely to give him our unqualified admiration.

Anyone who wishes to have direct evidence of the way we thought, talked and argued in that lively group, in those days, should read Herder's essay on Shakespeare in *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* ('The characters of German art'), and also Lenz's\* *Anmerkungen übers Theater* ('Notes on the Theatre') to which a translation of *Love's Labour's Lost* is appended. Herder penetrates into the depths of Shakespeare's mind and gives a brilliant picture of it; Lenz takes a more iconoclastic attitude towards dramatic tradition,

\* Jacob Lenz (1751-1792), a poet of real originality, and at that time Goethe's equal. He became insane in 1778, and left only a small body of finished work behind him.

insisting on everything, everywhere, being done in the Shakespearean manner.

Perhaps as I have mentioned this extremely gifted and extraordinary man, this is the place to try to say something about him. I got to know him only towards the end of my stay in Strasbourg. We saw each other seldom, for we did not mix with the same people; but we took every opportunity of meeting and liked to exchange ideas, as we were of the same age and had the same interests. He was small but trim, with a delightfully-shaped little head, its exquisite outline in perfect harmony with his delicate though somewhat blunt features; he had blue eyes and fair hair and was, in fact, the kind of person I have come across more than once among Nordic young men. He walked softly, almost cautiously, and spoke pleasantly though with a trace of hesitation, and his manner, hovering between reserve and shyness, was rather attractive in a young man. He was very good at reading short poems aloud, and particularly his own, and he had a flowing handwriting. The best word I can think of for his cast of mind is the English "whimsical," which, as the dictionary proves, concentrates quite a number of peculiar things in one notion. Perhaps just for this reason no one was more capable than he was of feeling and imitating the extravagances and eccentricities of Shakespeare's genius. The translation which I have mentioned is evidence of it. Far from keeping close to the text, he treated his author with great freedom, but he was so well able to don his predecessor's armour, or rather, his motley coat, and strike his characteristic attitudes, that he was certain to be applauded by everyone who had a taste for such things.

What threw us into the greatest ecstasies were the absurdities of the Fools, and we thought the world of Lenz when he succeeded in making a version of the epitaph on the deer shot by the princess, the original of which reads\*:

"The praiseful princess pierc'd and prick'd a pretty  
pleasing pricket;

\* From *Love's Labour's Lost*

Some say a sore; but not a sore till now made sore with shooting.

The dogs did yell; put L to sore, then sorel jumps from thicket

Or pricket, sore, or else sorel; the people fall a-hooting.

If sore be sore, then L to sore makes fifty sores, O sore L!

Of one sore I an hundred make, by adding but one more L."

The taste for nonsense—which has free play in youth and later gradually recedes into the background, though without being entirely lost—being in its heyday among us, we tried to do our great master honour with quips and quiddities of our own. We were puffed up with pride when we could present the company with something of this sort that received any measure of approval, such as for instance the following lines on a captain of cavalry who had been thrown by an unbroken horse:

"A knight is master of this mansion,  
He's too a master in the saddle,  
He has a horse-guard captain's pension  
For horsemanship in peace and battle.  
He's known and famed all through the land,  
A lord of stallions and of mares,  
But if a horse gets out of hand,  
Woe to him and woe to his heirs."

There used to be very solemn arguments as to whether such things were worthy of the Fool or not and whether they had sprung from the true, pure source of foolery or whether by some shocking accident a certain amount of sense had got mixed up with them. Speaking generally, these strange views of ours spread like wildfire and people were all the readier to take them up because Lessing, who was greatly respected, had actually been the first to give the word in his *Dramaturgie*.

In this congenial and turbulent company I made many a pleasant trip into upper Alsace, coming back without, for

obvious reasons, being much the wiser. The many little poems that bubbled up at every opportunity, probably enough to make a bright account of our travels, have all been lost. In the transept of Molsheim Abbey we admired the stained glass; in the fertile district between Colmar and Schlettstadt we sang farcical hymns to Ceres, with detailed descriptions and praises of the many uses of so many fruits, including a rollicking discussion on the important question whether there should be free or restricted trade in them. In Ensisheim we saw the huge aerolite hung up in the church and mocked at people's credulity, with all the scepticism of that period, not suspecting that later on, even if such atmospheric objects did not fall in our own fields, at least we would preserve them in our glass cases.

It is a pleasure to remember a pilgrimage that we, like hundreds, even thousands of believers, made to the Odilienberg. The story is that here, where there are still remains of the walls of a Roman camp, a nobleman's beautiful daughter chose to live in devout seclusion among the ruins and stony crevices. Not far from the chapel, where the pilgrims stop to pray, there is a well that she is said to have used, and the guide tells a number of charming legends about her. The picture that I formed of her, and her name, Ottilie, made a deep impression on me. They both lingered in my mind for a long time, until at last I bequeathed them to one of my later though not the less beloved daughters, who was so well received by many sensitive and high-minded readers of the book in which she appeared.\*

From this mountain, too, one sees the majestic panorama of Alsace, always the same and always new. Just as, wherever one chooses to sit in an amphitheatre, one has a view of the entire crowd, while seeing one's neighbours most plainly, so it is here with bushes, rocks, hills, woods, fields, meadows and villages near and far. It was pointed out to us that one could even see Basel on the sky-line; I will not swear

\* Goethe is referring to his novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* ('The Elective Affinities').

that we actually saw it, but even at that distance the remote blue of the Swiss Alps cast its spell over us, calling us towards them and making our hearts ache because we could not set out on the instant.

I gave myself up to such distractions and cheerful amusements all the more eagerly, drugging myself with pleasure, as my passionate relationship to Friederike was beginning to trouble me. A youthful love-affair of this sort, allowed to flourish haphazard, might be compared to a bomb thrown at night, rising in a smooth, shining curve, mingling with the stars, almost seeming to linger there for an instant, only to fall again, describing the same curve but in the opposite direction and bringing destruction where its flight ends. Friederike was still the same as ever; it was as though she neither thought nor wanted to think that our relationship might soon come to an end. On the other hand, Olivia, who would also be sorry to see me go, although she would not be losing as much as her sister, either had more foresight or was more candid. She often talked to me about my eventual departure and tried to comfort herself both on her own and on her sister's account. A girl renouncing a man, without denying that she is in love with him, is by no means in such an awkward situation as a youth who has gone to the same lengths in his declarations. He always cuts a wretched figure; for since he is on the threshold of manhood, people expect him to have a fairly clear picture of what he is about, and thorough-going frivolity does not suit him. A girl's reasons for changing her mind always seem adequate, a man's never.

But when we are bewitched by passion, how are we to see where it may be leading us? Even when we have renounced it, with all our wits about us, we cannot quite let go; we go on indulging in the habit we are so fond of, although perhaps we do it differently now. That was how it was with me. It was, indeed, upsetting to be with Friederike, yet there was nothing I found pleasanter than to think of her and talk to her in my imagination, when she was not with me. I went out there more rarely, but our letters flew to and fro all the

faster. She had such a cheerful way of describing things, such a graceful way of expressing her feelings, and I dwelt on her charms with delight. Absence set me free, and my love only came to its full bloom in this exchange of feelings over a distance. At such times I was quite capable of turning a blind eye to the future; and I was a good deal distracted by the whirling of time and urgent business. Hitherto I had managed to do a great number of different things by always throwing myself into the immediate present; but towards the end everything crowded together as overpoweringly as it generally does when one is about to take leave of a place.

And yet another incident took up my last few days. I was one of a fairly large party at a country house that had a splendid view of the front of the Minster and the spire rising over it. "What a pity," someone said, "that it was never finished and we only have the one spire." "What I am sorry about," I answered, "is that even this one spire is not finished. For the four volutes leave off much too bluntly. There ought to have been four light spires on them and a taller one in the centre where that clumsy cross is."

When I had made this assertion in my usual vigorous manner, a brisk little man turned to me and asked: "Who told you that?"

"The spire itself," I retorted. "I have looked at it so long and carefully, and shown it so much affection, that in the end it went so far as to confess this rather obvious secret to me."

"Its information was quite accurate," he replied. "I should know best, for I am in charge of public works and monuments. We still have the original plans in our archives, making it quite clear that it is so. I can show them to you, if you like."

As I was to leave in a few days, I urged him to do me this favour as soon as possible. He let me see the precious rolls, and with oiled paper I quickly did a tracing of the spires missing from the building as it stands, and was sorry I had not known of this treasure earlier. But it was always to be

like this with me; time and again I had to struggle through to an understanding of things by looking at them and thinking about them, and my understanding might not have been so intense and fruitful if it had been handed to me ready made.


In spite of all this haste and confusion I could not, of course, miss seeing Friederike once again. Those were painful days and I do not remember them clearly. When I held out my hand to her for the last time, from the saddle, she had tears in her eyes, and I felt very miserable. Then I rode along the footpath to Drusenheim, and there I experienced a very strange premonition. What I saw—not with my physical eyes, but with the mind's eye—was myself coming along the same way towards me, on horseback, and wearing clothes of a kind I never used to wear, grey with a touch of gold. And then I shook myself out of this dream, and the figure vanished. However, it is strange that eight years later, wearing the clothes of this vision—not deliberately but by accident—I came along the same road to visit Friederike once again. Whatever the truth of such things may be, the queer hallucination was something of a comfort to me in that hour of parting. My sorrow at leaving glorious Alsace, with all that I had known and cared for there, and leaving it for ever, was now lessened; and once I had escaped from the turmoil of saying goodbye, I came to myself again, feeling a good deal better, on a tranquil, cheerful journey.

*[Goethe was not, however, capable of putting Friederike behind him, and was consequently not in possession of his new-found tranquillity for long.]*

Friederike's answer to a farewell letter wrung my heart. Here was the same handwriting, the same attitude, the same feeling that had evolved for my sake and in companionship with me. Now for the first time I felt what a loss she was suffering and saw no possibility of making it good or even consoling her for it. I imagined her so vividly that it was as though she were present; I could not shake off the sense of missing her, and the worst of it all was that I could not forgive myself for my own misfortune. Gretchen had been —



taken from me, Annette had deserted me, here for the first time I was guilty; I had wounded the loveliest heart to its depths. So the thought of a period spent in gloomy remorse, in the absence of an accustomed, refreshing love, was highly distressing, even unbearable. But human beings cling to life. So I took a sincere interest in others, I tried to disentangle their problems and to bring together those who seemed to be drifting apart, lest they should experience what I had. So I was generally known as "the confidant," and also, on account of my roving about the countryside, "the wanderer." It was all the easier for me to soothe my turbulent feelings, as I could only under the wide sky, in valleys or on the hills, in fields and woods, because Frankfurt is very fortunately situated midway between Darmstadt and Homburg, two pleasant places with courts that are on good terms because their princes are related to each other. I got into the habit of living on the highroad and roaming to and fro, like a messenger, between the mountains and the plain. I often walked, alone or with friends, through my native city as though it were a place I did not know, dined in one of the large inns in the Fahrgasse and then continued on my way. I was more taken up than I had ever been with the open air and unspoilt nature. As I walked I would sing strange hymns and dithyrambs aloud; one of them, *Wanderer's Storm-Song*, still survives. I sang this semi-nonsense to myself in a sort of passion, one time when a terrible thunderstorm overtook me, and I walking against the wind.



## WERTHER AND JERUSALEM

[After returning to Frankfurt a qualified lawyer, Goethe inscribed himself at the Imperial Court of Law at Wetzlar. He was, however, far too preoccupied with poetry to pay serious attention to his profession.]

WITH that decision to grant my personality its inner and peculiar freedom and let outward circumstances take their course with me, I drifted into the queer condition in which *Werther*\* was thought out and written. I tried to rid my inner self of all alien elements, to contemplate external things sympathetically and let all beings, from man down to the smallest comprehensible form of life, have their influence on me. So I came to feel a strange and wonderful affinity with all nature's various forms and a full resonance, a chiming in harmony with all things, so that I was very deeply moved by every change, whether of place or of the times of day, and by the seasons, and each individual happening. The painter's eye combined with the poet's, and the beautiful landscape, with the bright river flowing through it, increased my inclination to solitude and favoured my quiet musings and mental explorations.

But since I had left that family circle in Sesenheim, and then again my friends in Frankfurt and Darmstadt, there was an emptiness in my heart that I could not fill. And so I was in that state of mind which lets love, if only it comes slightly veiled, steal upon us unawares and ruin all our good resolutions.

And now at this stage in his undertaking, the author for the first time feels he can regard the work with a light heart; for it is only from now on that this book will become what it

\* This novel had an autobiographical germ. The hero, Werther, is compounded of himself and the unfortunate Jerusalem, of which we read later; his love-affair leading him not to a hasty departure, as did Goethe's with Charlotte Buff but, as in Jerusalem's case, to suicide.

really should be. It did not set out to be an independent work; on the contrary, it is really meant to fill in the gaps in a writer's life, to complete many a fragment and keep alive the memory of ventures lost and forgotten. But what is once over and done with cannot and should not be repeated; and indeed the writer would now try in vain to conjure up emotions long sunk in oblivion, in vain demand that they should bring back to life that enchanted time in the valley of the Lahn. Fortunately his presiding genius provided for this long ago, when it impelled him, in the vigour of his youth, to pin down and give form to the immediate past and in a lucky hour to present it, audaciously enough, to the public. It is almost superfluous to say that I am speaking of my little book *Werther*; but there are one or two things to be revealed about the people in it and the emotions described.

Among the young men attached to the delegation and preparing themselves for their future official career, was one whom we used simply to call the *fiancé*.\* He was noted for his calm, steady manner, definite views and decisive way of acting and talking. His cheerful activity and conscientious work made his superiors think so well of him that he was promised an appointment very soon, and thus justified his becoming engaged to a young lady who was everything a man of his temperament could wish. After her mother's death she had very successfully managed a large family of younger brothers and sisters and had been the sole comfort of her father in his bereavement; which might well lead her future husband to hope the same for himself and his children and expect a very happy family life. Everyone, even those who had not his aim in mind personally, admitted that she was a girl one would like to marry. She was one of those who, if they do not arouse violent passion, at least do make everyone fond of them. She was slender and slightly built, her temperament was fresh and healthy, and she had all that blithe, bustling activity that goes with it, a ready knack of dealing

\* Johann Christian Kestner, eight years Goethe's senior, was a member of one of the smaller State delegations to the Imperial Court

with all the little things that crop up every day—all in all a happy combination of qualities. I always felt the better for contemplating such characteristics and liked to associate with people who had them; and if I had not always the opportunity of really doing anything for them, at least I preferred them as companions of those innocent pleasures that young people find so ready to hand and that can be taken up without much effort. And, moreover, since it is generally agreed that women only dress and adorn themselves for other women's benefit, always egging each other on to fresh heights of adornment, I may say I was most charmed with those who merely cared for simple neatness, so giving their lover or betrothed the unspoken assurance that it was done only for his sake and that there would be little need of strain or effort in order to keep it up for a whole life-time.

People of this sort do not spend much time thinking about themselves; they have leisure to notice what is going on around them and the peace of mind to adapt themselves accordingly and find their own level; they grow effortlessly into balanced, sensible people, and need few books for their development. This is the sort of person the *fiancée* was. The bridegroom, being of a thoroughly straightforward, trustful character, introduced to her everyone he thought well of and, himself being very busy most of the day, liked to think that when she had finished her domestic duties, she had other amusements, going out on walks and picnics with parties of friends. Lotte\*—for now it may as well be admitted that was really her name—had no ambitions, in a double sense; first of all, her unassuming nature made her content to be generally liked, with no particular claims upon the individual; and furthermore, her ambitions were fulfilled as she had become engaged to a man well suited to her who was prepared to link his fate with hers for life. Everything around her was blithe and cheerful. Indeed, if it is pleasant to see parents devoting ceaseless care to their children, there is something still more beautiful in seeing brothers and sisters doing the

\* Charlotte Buff

same for each other. In the first case there is more natural instinct and social tradition; in the other it is more a matter of choice and the free play of feeling.

The new arrival was perfectly free from all ties and needed to have no scruples in enjoying the company of a girl who, being already engaged, could not interpret the most marked attentions as anything but pure friendship, and so could enjoy them all the more. He drifted on without thinking about it, but was soon so enmeshed, emotionally so involved, and at the same time treated so charmingly and trustfully by the young couple, that he scarcely knew himself. Indolent and dreamy as he was, never satisfied by the present, he found what he had been missing in this girl who, while taking thought for the whole of the year, seemed to be living only for the instant. She liked him well as a companion, and soon he could not do without her, for she was his link with the world of everyday things. And so they soon became inseparable companions, everywhere about the large farm, in the fields and meadows, among the vegetable-beds and in the garden. If the *fiancé* was not too busy, he would join them; without meaning it, without even knowing how it had come about, all three had become so attached that they could not do without each other. So they spent all that glorious summer living in a truly German idyll, the fruitful land the prose of it, and pure affection the poetry. Rambling through ripe cornfields, they breathed the freshness of the dewy morning; the lark's song, and the cry of the quail, chimed deliciously on the ear; and in the hot hours following, when huge thunderstorms crashed over them, the three friends drew all the closer together, and many a small family annoyance was smoothed over by unfailing love. And so one ordinary day slipped into the next, and all of them seemed holidays; the whole calendar should have been printed in red. Anyone will understand me who remembers what was prophesied about the happily unhappy lover in the *New Héloïse*: "And sitting at her feet he will pick hemp, and he will wish

to go on picking hemp today, tomorrow and the day after, indeed his whole life long."

There is little—but that as much as is necessary—that I can say about a young man whose name was afterwards uttered all too often. This was Jerusalem, the son of that liberal-minded and humane theologian. He, too, was attached to a delegation. He was pleasant looking, of middle height, and well built; his face was round rather than long, his features soft and calm, and all in all he was a handsome, fair young man, with blue eyes that were attractive rather than compelling. He dressed in the traditional Low German style, which is an imitation of the English: a blue frock-coat, a chamois yellow waistcoat and buckskins, and boots with brown tops. The author never visited him nor received him at home, but he did sometimes meet him among friends. In conversation he was reserved but friendly. He took an interest in the most varied things and was particularly fond of drawings and sketches that had caught the quiet character of lonely places. So he would bring out engravings of Gessner's and urge people who cared for that sort of thing to make a study of them. He took little or no part in all the mummery of the chivalrous societies, keeping to himself and following his own tastes. It was rumoured that he was very much in love with the wife of a friend of his. They were never seen together in public. On the whole there was little to be said about him, except that he took a lively interest in English literature. Being the son of a wealthy man, he did not need to worry himself with hard work nor to make urgent applications for an appointment.

Those engravings of Gessner's heightened our delight and interest in country scenes, and a slight poem that we were ecstatic about in our small circle made us incapable of thinking about anything else. Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* could not fail to appeal to everyone on our intellectual level, in such an atmosphere. Here it all was—not as something alive and active, but as a world that is vanished and gone—all that we so enjoyed seeing, all we loved and appreciated

and sought for so enthusiastically in the present, enjoying it with all our youthful vigour—high days and holidays in the country, fairs and market days with the solemn assemblage of the elders under the linden tree on the village green, and these then hurried away by the younger people, bursting with desire to dance, and the gentry looking on, with kindly interest. How seemly these amusements appeared, moderated by a worthy pastor who had his way of toning down or getting rid of anything that overstepped the mark and might have led to quarrelling and brawls. Here again, then, was our honest Wakefield in his familiar circle, but now no longer as he had been alive, in the flesh, but only a shadow called up by the elegiac poet's soft, mournful song. The very idea of this portrayal is one of the most delightful I know, once the intention is there to conjure up the innocent past in an air of graceful melancholy. And how successful the Englishman's genial work of art is from every point of view! My enthusiasm for this entrancing poem was shared by Gotter, whose attempt at a translation of it was better than mine. I had been too anxious to preserve the delicate nuances of the original in our own language and so, though I made lucky hits with some passages, I did not succeed with the whole.

And if the greatest bliss lies in longing, as they say, and if true longing is always for something unattainable, then everything combined to make the young man whom we are accompanying on his wanderings through life the happiest of mortals. Being in love with a girl already promised, being eager to make the masterpieces of foreign literature his own and adopt them into his own literature, endeavouring to imitate things in nature not only with words, but with pencil and brush as well, though without any real knowledge of technique—each of these alone would have been enough to make the heart throb and the breast tighten with a sense of yearning

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My friend and probable brother-in-law\* was now, of course,

\* Johann Georg Schlosser (1739-99), who married Cornelia Goethe in 1773

very interested that I should return home, because my being there as an intermediary made it easier for him to see my sister, which seemed to have become a necessity to this man who had so unexpectedly fallen in love. So when he left, shortly afterwards, he made me promise to follow him immediately.

As for Merck,\* whose time was his own just then, I hoped he would prolong his stay in Giessen so that I could spend several hours of the day with my good Höpfner,† while my friend was giving his time to the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*§ (Frankfurt Learned Gazette); but there was, no talking him over, and as love drove my brother-in-law, so hate drove Merck from the university. There are innate antipathies; for example, just as certain people cannot endure cats, others utterly loathe this or that; and Merck was the sworn foe of all students. Frankly, the students at Giessen in those days were out-and-out barbarians and revelled in it. I had no objection to them and I could have used them as masks in one of my carnival comedies; but his temper was ruined by the mere sight of them by day and the sound of their bellowing by night. He had spent the happiest days of his youth in the French part of Switzerland and later had had the good fortune to mix with courtiers, men of the world and of business, and men of letters; there were several officers who used to visit him, having woken up to a taste for intellectual improvement, and he moved, all in all, among highly cultivated people. It was therefore not surprising that this rowdyism should annoy him; and yet his repugnance for the wild students was really more furious than seemed fitting in a mature man, even though he often had me in fits of laughter with his amusing descriptions of their monstrous appearance and behaviour. Höpfner's invitations and my encouragement had no effect, and I had to set out for Wetzlar with him in all possible haste.

\* Johann Heinrich Merck (1741-91), writer and amateur of the arts

† The Professor of Law at Giessen, highly esteemed by Goethe and his friends.

§ To which Goethe contributed book reviews. Schlosser was editor, Höpfner and Merck contributors



I could scarcely wait to introduce him to Lotte; but his presence in this circle did not turn out well for me. For just as Mephistopheles can hardly bring blessing with him, no matter where he puts in an appearance, so Merck, with his indifference to the girl I was in love with, if he did not actually bring me to the point of wavering, at least gave me no joy. Doubtless I might have foreseen it if I had remembered that he was never particularly taken with precisely this sort of slim, fragile girl who radiates cheerfulness all about her, without asking any more of life. He was very quick to prefer the Junoesque figure of one of her friends, and as he had no time to get to know her better, he gave me a downright bitter scolding for not paying court to this superb creature, all the more as she was free, not attached to anyone. He told me that I simply did not know what was good for me and that he was most put out to see me, here again, at my usual hobby of wasting my time.

If it is dangerous to make a friend acquainted with the charms of one's lady-love, because he may also find them delightful and desirable, there is no less danger in the opposite possibility: that he may put us off with his disapproval. This was not really the case here, for I had stamped the image of her perfections far too deeply into my mind for it to be so easily erased; but his presence and his urgings did, nevertheless, speed up my decision to leave the place. He talked so delightfully about a journey down the Rhine, which he was just about to make with his wife and son, that it made me long to set eyes at last on the scenes I had so often enviously heard described. Now, when he had gone, I parted from Lotte, with a clearer conscience, certainly, than from Friederike, but yet not without grief. This relationship had been a thing of such easy habit that it too had developed into something more passionate than was proper on my side. But she and her betrothed, with their cheerful attitude to life, kept up an even moderation that could not have been more kind and charming, and the sense of security this gave me made me forget there was any danger. However, I could

not conceal from myself that this adventure must soon end, for when the young man was promoted, as he would be at any time now, the marriage would take place; and as human beings can, if they have any determination at all, make up their minds to the inevitable, so I resolved to go away of my own free will, before I was driven away by unbearable circumstances.

*[Goethe departed to meet Merck, but Merck soon left for St. Petersburg: Lotte and Kestner married, as did Cornelia Goethe and Schlosser, and Herder also, leaving Goethe, now rather lonely, to regret Lotte and correspond with Kestner.]*

## THE WRITING OF "WERTHER"

**T**HIS disgust with life\* has its physical and its moral causes; we shall leave it to the doctors to investigate the former, to the moralists the latter. And since the subject is so well worn, let us only consider the main point, where this condition manifests itself most distinctly. All enjoyment of living is based upon a regular recurrence of external things. The alternation of day and night, of the seasons, flowers and fruits and everything that we can and should enjoy, that comes our way at regular periods—this is the actual mainspring of earthly life. The more susceptible we are to these pleasures, the happier we feel; but if these various phases surge along past us, rising and falling, without our being able to care about them—if we are not sensitive to the lovely promise they hold out—then the greatest affliction, the worst disease, has set in: one begins to regard life as a loathsome burden. There is a story of an Englishman who hanged himself because he did not want to go on dressing and undressing every day. I knew a worthy man, head gardener on a large property, who once irritably exclaimed: "Must I always see these rain-clouds driving from west to east?" And one of our most eminent men is said to have been annoyed at seeing the returning green of spring, wishing that it might once be red for a change. These are the real symptoms of a weariness of life that not infrequently results in suicide; with thoughtful people, absorbed in themselves, it was more frequent than one would believe.

Nothing does more to cause this ennui than the return of love. First love, as people rightly say, is the only one; in the second, and with the second, love's most sublime meaning is lost. The sense of something eternal and infinite, which is what buoys love up and sweeps it on, is now destroyed and love appears as transient as everything else that recurs. Here,

\* Expressed in the character of Werther

too, the separation of the sensual from the moral, which in this complicated civilised world makes a split between feelings of affection and feelings of desire, produces an over-wrought condition that cannot but be harmful.

Further, a young man soon notices, either in himself or in others, that moral phases have their flux just like the seasons of the year. The graciousness of the great, the favour of those in power, the success of the active, popularity with the crowd, affection from individuals—it all ebbs and flows without our being able to hold it fast any more than we can hold the sun, moon and stars. And yet these things are not merely natural events: they elude us, whether by reason of our own fault or that of others, by accident or fate; but they change, and we are never sure of them.

But what most torments a sensitive young man is the inexorable recurrence of mistakes. For how late we learn to understand that while we are cultivating our virtues, our faults are growing with them. Our good qualities are based on our bad qualities, rooted in them, and the bad go branching out as strongly and intricately underground as the good do up in broad daylight. And because we generally practise our virtues consciously and deliberately, while our faults take us off our guard, the former rarely cause us much pleasure, while the latter are a constant source of misery and torment. This is the difficult thing about self-knowledge; this is what makes it almost impossible. If to all this one adds young blood in a ferment, an imagination easily paralysed by random events, and the flickering aspects of the moving day, one will not think there is anything unnatural in an impatient striving to get out of such a predicament.

However, dismal broodings of this sort, which, once a man abandons himself to them, lead him out to infinity, could never have had such a marked effect on young Germans if there had not been an outside cause to encourage them in this gloomy preoccupation. What caused it was English literature and particularly poetry, which, with all its great beauties, has a strain of grave melancholy that catches on

in the mind of everyone who reads much of it. The intelligent Briton finds himself from his earliest youth in a momentous world that stimulates all his abilities; sooner or later he realises that he must exert his reasoning mind to the utmost in order to come to terms with it. How many of their writers led a loose and riotous life as young men, and soon found themselves justified in denouncing the vanity of earthly things! How many of them tried their luck in affairs of state and in parliament, at court, in the ministries or embassies, some in leading positions, some as subordinates, and took an active part in civil disturbances and changes in the state and government, their experience—if not in their own case, then at any rate in that of their friends and patrons—turning out to be sad more often than pleasant. How many were driven into exile, were imprisoned or suffered material damage!

But even being a mere beholder of such great events inclines a man to seriousness. And where can seriousness lead in the end but to contemplation of the transience and worthlessness of all earthly things? The German is serious, too, and so English poetry appealed to him strongly and impressed him all the more because it was written from loftier heights. Everywhere in it one finds a great, vigorous and realistic intellect, deep, sensitive feeling, a high sense of purpose in the conception and an impassioned energy in the execution, the most glorious qualities one could wish for in men of intellect and culture. But all this together does not necessarily make a poet. What characterises true poetry is that, being a gospel for this world, it has an inner serenity and an outward ease that liberate us from the earthly burdens weighing upon us. It is like a balloon bearing us upward with the ballast that is attached to us, soaring into higher regions from which we have a bird's-eye view of the tangled mazes on the earth. The gayest and the gravest works have the same purpose, to moderate our pleasure and our pain by a successfully intelligent interpretation. If we look at the majority of English poems, most of which are moral and didactic, in this light, we find that on the average they reveal only a gloomy

weariness of life. Not only Young's *Night Thoughts*, in which this theme is brilliantly worked out, but the other contemplative poems too, before one is aware of it, stray off into this dismal region where the intellect is set a problem that it is not capable of solving, since any religion that man may contrive will here leave him in the lurch. One might collect whole volumes as a commentary on this terrible text:

"Then old age and experience, hand in hand,  
Lead him to death, and make him understand,  
After a search so painful and so long,  
That all his life he has been in the wrong."\*

And what makes English poets complete misanthropes and diffuses such an unpleasant feeling of discontent with everything all through their writing, is that with the many schisms in their public life all of them must devote, if not their entire lives, at least the best part of their lives to some party or other. And as such a writer must not praise and make much of the members of his own party or sect and the cause that he supports, because that would only arouse envy and resentment, he exercises his talent by saying the very worst he can of those on the other side and sharpening, even poisoning, his satirical weapons to the utmost. If this is done by both sides, the world that lies between them is destroyed and simply cancelled out, so that in looking at a great, sensible, vigorous nation one sees nothing but—to put it mildly—folly and madness. Even their tender poems have sad subjects. Here a forsaken maiden dies, there a faithful lover is drowned or, while rashly swimming to his lady, is devoured by a shark. And when a poet like Gray settles down in a country churchyard and once again strikes up the familiar tune, he can be sure of attracting a gathering of melancholy's admirers. Milton's *L'Allegro* has first to frighten gloom away in energetic verse before he can arrive at a very moderate delight; and even cheerful Goldsmith dissolves in elegiac sentiments when his *Deserted Village* charmingly but mournfully shows us a lost

\* From the Earl of Rochester's 'Satire Against Mankind.'

paradise that his *Traveller* is searching for all over the world.

I do not doubt that I shall be shown lively works, cheerful poems, in disproof of what I have said. But I am sure most of them, and the best of them, belong to an earlier epoch; the more recent works of this kind likewise have a satirical tendency, and are bitter and contemptuous, especially about women.

Well then, the kind of serious poems I have mentioned in general, poems of a kind to undermine human nature, were the favourites that we sought out before all others, one man's taste being more for the lighter elegiac melancholy, another preferring the note of heavily oppressive, sweeping despair. Strangely enough, our father and teacher, Shakespeare, who can create such an atmosphere of pure cheerfulness, only intensified our moping. Hamlet and his soliloquies were phantoms haunting all our young minds. Everyone knew the main passages by heart and took every chance of reciting them, and everyone fancied himself entitled to be as melancholy as the Prince of Denmark although he had seen no ghost and had no royal father to avenge.

But, finally, lest we should lack a perfect setting for all this desolation, Ossian had lured us to Ultima Thule, where we roamed across grey, endless moors, among moss-grown monoliths, the grass all around us stirred by a spectral wind, and a cloudy sky lowering over us. The only light this Caledonian landscape knew was that of the moon; there heroes gone to their doom, and maidens long perished, hovered about us, until in the end we almost seemed to see the ghost of Loda himself, a grisly shape.

In such an atmosphere, with such a mental environment, with tastes and studies of this kind, tortured by unsatisfied passions, receiving no outside stimulus to ambition, with no prospect but that of plodding along in a humdrum, pointless, commonplace life of bourgeois respectability, in a querulous wanton spirit we took to the thought that if life became too irksome one could always part from it whenever one liked,

and so we got ourselves wretchedly enough through the blight and boredom of the days. It was because this attitude was so general that *Werther* produced such a great effect; it struck a familiar chord everywhere and gave a clear picture of a morbid youthful delusion, for all to see. How well the English knew this sort of wretchedness is shown by these significant few lines, written before *Werther's* publication:

"To griefs congenial prone,  
More wounds than nature gave he knew,  
While misery's form his fancy drew  
In dark ideal hues and horrors not its own."\*

Suicide is an event in human experience which, however much may have been said about it already, still does rouse everyone's interest and has to be discussed over again in every epoch. Montesquieu grants his heroes and great men the right to go to their deaths as they think fit; in his view everyone must be permitted to finish the fifth act of his own tragedy as he pleases. But here we are not concerned with those who have done great things, giving their lives to some vast empire or to the cause of freedom, those to whom one would scarcely grudge it if, when the idea that inspired them has vanished from the earth, they choose to follow it into the world beyond. Here we are dealing with people living in the most peaceful circumstances imaginable, whose life is embittered by a lack of action, by exaggerated demands on themselves. As I was in this state myself and best know what agony it caused me and what efforts it cost me to escape from it, I shall not withhold the reflections which I made, with great care and deliberation, on the various kinds of death that one might choose.

It is something so unnatural for man to wrench himself out of his own life, not merely injuring, but actually destroying himself, that he usually seizes on mechanical means of carrying out his purpose. When Ajax runs on his sword, it is the weight of his body that does him this last service. When the warrior makes his shield-bearer swear not to let him fall into

\* From 'The Suicide,' by Joseph Warton.



the hands of the enemy, it is still an outside force that he is making use of, only a moral instead of a physical one. Women turn to water to quell their despair; and the highly mechanical method of fire-arms guarantees a quick end with the least trouble. One avoids talking of hanging because it is a shameful death; it is most likely to be found in England, because there people have been so used to seeing hangings, without there being anything altogether disgraceful in such a penalty. Poisoning and opening the veins are ways of slipping out of life slowly; and the most exquisite, swift and painless death—the bite of an asp—was worthy of a queen who had spent her life in the midst of splendour and delights. But all these are external aids, enemies with which a man forms an alliance against himself.

And now when I considered all these methods and looked about me further in history, among all those who killed themselves, I found none who had done the deed with such grandeur and in such sanity of mind as the Emperor Otto. Having suffered reverses on the field of battle, though without being anything like finally defeated, he resolved to quit the world for the sake of the Empire, which was practically his, and so save many thousands of lives. He gave a cheerful banquet to his friends, and was found the next morning with a sharp dagger plunged into his heart by his own hand. This was the only suicide I found worthy of imitation, and I convinced myself that anyone who could not do as Otto had done could not be allowed the privilege of taking his leave of the world. This conviction did not save me either from the intention or from the whim of committing suicide, an idea that had crept into the mind of idle youth in those glorious times of peace. Among a considerable collection of weapons I also possessed an exquisite, finely tempered dagger. This I always laid beside my bed, and before I put out the light I used to experiment with trying to run the sharp point a few inches into my breast. But as somehow I could never manage to do this, in the end I laughed at myself, threw off all these hypochondriac affectations and made up my mind to go on

living. If I was to do this cheerfully, however, I had first to carry out a task giving shape to everything I had felt, thought and fancied on this important subject. So I began collecting the notions that had been revolving in my mind for a few years, vividly recalling the situations in which I had felt the worst torment and depression. But I could not make it come to anything; I lacked an episode to give it body, I lacked a plot.

Then suddenly I heard the news of Jerusalem's death, and immediately after the first rumour, the most detailed and exact description of what had happened. And there, in that instant, the plan for *Werther* was; the whole thing coagulated, turning into a solid mass, just as water in a bowl, when it is on the point of freezing, at the slightest jolt instantly turns into solid ice. It was all the more important for me to hold on to this strange trove and imagine and work out a book with such an important subject, in all its aspects, as I had once again got myself into an awkward situation that seemed even more hopeless than the earlier ones, with no prospect but gloom and misery.

It is always a misfortune to change over to living in circumstances in which one was not brought up; but we are often involved, against our will, in things not meant for us; we are tormented by the incompleteness of such conditions, and yet we cannot see any way of either completing them or getting out of them.

Frau von Laroche had married her eldest daughter\* in Frankfurt, often came to visit her and could not quite reconcile herself to the situation she had herself brought about. Instead of being content with what she had done, or trying to make any sort of change, she indulged in such lamentations that one was really forced to imagine her daughter was unhappy, although, as the young woman wanted for nothing and her husband denied her nothing, it was rather difficult to see just what the calamity was. In the meantime, I had been

\* Maximiliane von Laroche, married at seventeen to the Italian merchant P. A. Brentano, a widower with five children, one of whom, Clemens, was later famous as a poet and writer of fairy tales. Brentano objected to Goethe's attentions to his young wife

welcomed into the house and come into contact with their entire set, which was made up of people who had either helped to bring the marriage about or hoped it would turn out happily. Dumeiz, the dean of St. Leonhard's, took to me, indeed became friends with me. He was the first Catholic priest with whom I had come into close touch and, being a man of great penetration, he gave me very full and fascinating explanations of many things to do with the faith, ritual and internal and external workings of the oldest Church. I also clearly remember a good-looking woman, no longer young, of the name of Servièrè. I came into contact with the Alösina-Schweizer and other families and became firm friends with the sons; indeed, all at once I found myself at home among another set of people, inclined and even more or less compelled to join in their occupations, amusements and even their religious observances. My earlier relations with the young woman, which were actually those of brother and sister, continued after her marriage; I was of the same age as herself and the only person among her friends from whom she still got an echo of the intellectual note she had been accustomed to hearing since childhood. We drifted along in child-like innocent friendship; but in spite of the fact that there was no touch of anything passionate in our relationship, it was rather uncomfortable, because she, too, could not settle down in her new environment. Although blessed with material goods, she could not help feeling the shock of being transplanted from her joyous youth in the cheerful valley below Ehrenbreitstein to the sombre setting of a merchant's house, where she was expected to act as a mother to several step-children. I was hemmed in among all these new domestic relations without either really belonging there or taking any active part. If everyone was getting on quite well, it was assumed to be a matter of course, but in the case of any difficulty most of the people concerned turned to me, and as a rule, my intense sympathy only made matters worse instead of better. It was not long before I began to find the situation intolerable. All the heart-burning that such half-and-half

relationships generally produced seemed to weigh double and threefold upon me, and once again I had to come to a violent decision in order to escape.

Jerusalem's death, which was the result of his unhappy passion for the wife of a friend, shook me out of the dream I had been in. And since I not only had a vivid mental image of what had happened to him and to myself, but was also feverishly wrought up by being in a similar situation at the moment, I inevitably filled the work I was just beginning with all that fiery breath of excitement that leaves no margin between the writer's creation and the reality on which he has drawn. I had isolated myself completely, even forbidding my friends to visit me, and in my own mind too I thrust aside everything that was not immediately relevant to my preoccupation. On the other hand, I gathered together everything that had any bearing on the subject and went over all that had happened to me in the recent past, events and feelings that I had not yet turned into poems or stories. It was in these circumstances, after such long and secret preparations, that I wrote *Werther* in four weeks, without a scheme of the whole book or a draft of any single part of it having been put on paper beforehand.

And there the finished manuscript lay before me, the first draft, with only a few changes and corrections. I had it bound at once; for the binding is to a manuscript pretty much what a frame is to a picture: one is far better able to see whether it really amounts to anything. As I had written this little book in a somnambulistic state, hardly knowing what I was doing, it was all rather surprising to myself as I went through it now to see what needed altering and touching up. But in the assumption that if I left it and looked at it again after a while with more detachment, I should notice a good deal that could do with improvement, I gave it to some of my younger friends to read; and it made all the greater impression on them because I had broken my usual habit and had told nobody anything about it, had not even mentioned what I was going to do. It must be admitted that

here it was once again the subject-matter that really produced the effect. And they were in precisely the opposite state of mind to my own: for more than anything else I had ever written, this work had rescued me from a stormy element in which I had been drifting about, tossed violently to and fro, by my own fault and others', by the accidental and deliberate actions of my life, by intention and carelessness, obstinacy and weakness. I felt like someone just after a general confession, free again and easy in my mind and with a right to start a new life. My old cure-all had stood me in good stead this time. But while I was feeling relieved and clear as to where I stood, as a result of having turned reality into poetic substance, my friends were entirely bewildered, believing that anyone who had written such a novel was bound to turn poetic substance back into reality, play the part out himself and, if need be, shoot himself; and what was at first the case among a few people later on became general among a larger public: the little book that had done me so much good was denounced as highly dangerous.

[*The success of "Werther" was immediate, but Goethe was much troubled by inquisitive enquiries as to its foundations in fact.*]

## LENZ AND LAVATER

WITH the movement\* that was spreading among the public there came another that was perhaps of greater importance to the author, since it arose in his own immediate circle. Older friends, who had read the works now creating such a stir while they were still in manuscript and so looked on them more or less as their own property, gloried in the success that they had been bold enough to prophesy. And they were joined by new admirers, especially by people who either felt they had some creative ability themselves or wanted to cultivate such ability.

Among the former Lenz stood out as the strangest and most remarkable. I have already given a brief description of what this extraordinary man looked like, and have dwelt affectionately on his whimsical turn of mind. Now I shall let his character speak for itself by simply recording facts, because it would be impossible to follow him through the aberrations of his career and describe all his peculiarities.

We are familiar with that self-torment which was all the fashion at that time among people who had no real troubles; it was particularly disturbing in its effect on the most brilliant minds. What only momentarily bothers ordinary people who do not observe themselves, and what they try to put out of their heads, was what people of greater sensibility noticed keenly and recorded in books, letters and diaries. But now what happened was that while the strictest moral demands were made on oneself and others, there was the greatest negligence in practical affairs; and the result of this inadequate self-knowledge was an arrogance that lured people into the most curious behaviour and bad habits. Such travails in the realm of self-observation were justified however by the new empirical psychology which, by neither condemning every-

\* Interest in political economy stimulated by Justus Moser's essays

thing that makes us inwardly restless nor wholly excusing it, set up a never-ending conflict. Among all the other idlers and dabblers who were undermining their inner selves, no one was better than Lenz at keeping this conflict alive; and so he too suffered from the general mood of the time, on which *Werther* later set the seal. But he had a peculiarity all his own which distinguished him from the rest of them, who were all thoroughly straightforward honest fellows. The trouble with Lenz was that he had a marked taste for intrigue and, what was more, intrigue for its own sake, without actually having any real, reasonable, selfish, practical ends in view; on the contrary, he was always planning something quite grotesque, which was precisely the reason why it amused him. So it came about that all his life long he was a ruffian only in his own imagination; his love and his hate were both imaginary; and he bandied his ideas and emotions about so wantonly so that he might always have something to do. He tried the most topsy-turvy ways of giving his likes and dislikes some substance in reality and always undid his handiwork again himself. So he was never any use to anyone he loved, nor did any harm to anyone he hated; and the long and the short of it was he seemed to sin only in order to hurt himself and to intrigue only in order to pile one tall story upon another

His genius, with its combination of warm emotion, ingenuity and subtlety, arose out of real profundity and inexhaustible creative power; but for all its beauty there was something morbid about it. Such talents are the most difficult of all to judge. One could not fail to recognise marks of greatness in his work; there was a lovely delicacy tip-toeing between dashes of caricature so crazy and grotesque that one could scarcely forgive them, even in a writer of his profound and spontaneous humour and his genuine comic gifts. His days were made up of the merest trivialities, which he, with his nimble wit, could somehow make significant; and he could well afford to squander hours away, having an excellent memory, so that he made the best use of the time he spent on reading and

could always trick out his bizarre thoughts with the most varied allusions.

He had been sent to Strasbourg with some Livonian noblemen, and there could hardly have been a more unfortunate choice of a mentor. The elder baron went home for some time, leaving behind a lady to whom he was much attached. In order to keep off the second brother, who was also paying court to this lady, and some other suitors as well, and save the adored lady's heart for his absent friend, Lenz decided to pretend to have fallen in love with the young beauty himself, or perhaps even really to fall in love with her. He carried out his plan with the most stubborn devotion to the ideal he had formed of her, refusing to realise that he, like all the others, was merely a source of entertainment to her. So much the better for him! For it was only a game on his side too, one that could be kept up all the more easily because she was playing with him, sometimes attracting, sometimes repulsing him, sometimes leading him on, sometimes taking him down a peg. We can be sure that when he came to his senses, as he did from time to time, he certainly congratulated himself on such a discovery of his with the greatest of complacency.

For the rest, he and the young noblemen under his care spent most of their time with officers of the garrison, among whom he probably developed the quaint opinions that he afterwards produced in his comedy *Die Soldaten* ('The Soldiers'). At any rate, this early acquaintance with the army had one peculiar result: he came to consider himself a great expert in military affairs. And indeed, as time passed he really did study the subject in such detail that some years later he drew up a long memorandum to the French Minister of War, from which he expected great things. He put his finger pretty accurately on the weaknesses in the existing state of affairs, but the remedies he suggested were ridiculous and quite impracticable. However, he was quite convinced that he would become very influential at court as a result of it and was far from grateful to those of his friends who came along when this fantastic work had already been copied out, put



into an envelope with a letter and addressed with all ceremony, and who, partly by arguing with him, partly by practical opposition, forced him to put off sending it and later on to burn it.

In conversation, and afterwards in letters, he told me all about the labyrinthine complications of his tortuous affair with the lady already mentioned. The poetry that he could put into the most ordinary things often amazed me so much that I urged him to turn the essentials of this rambling adventure to artistic account and make it into a little novel. But that was not in his line; the only time when he felt really happy was when he was pouring himself out on details, spinning an endless yarn with no particular end in view. Perhaps it will be possible some day to use these slight notes as a guide to his mode of life up to the time when he lost his reason; for the present I shall keep to the facts that have a direct bearing on my own story.

Scarcely had *Götz von Berlichingen*\* appeared when Lenz sent me a long-winded essay, written on cheap scribbling paper, which was what he generally used, and without any margin at all either at the top or bottom or at the sides. The essay had the title *Über unsere Ehe* ('On our Marriage'), and if it were still in existence it might enlighten us now more than it did me then, when I was still very much in the dark as to what sort of person he was. The main purpose of this long-winded screed was to compare my talent and his: sometimes he seemed to subordinate himself to me, sometimes to put himself on a level with me; but it was all done with so much wit and grace that I was all the readier to accept the view he put forward, especially as I really had a very great respect for his gifts, though I always urged him to pull himself out of his aimless ramblings, concentrate and make some use of his natural creative gifts by controlling them as an artist should. I sent a very friendly reply to this advance of his; and as in this essay he had clamoured for a very

\* Goethe's first important play, deeply influenced by Shakespeare's chronicle plays, was published in 1773

intimate relationship between us (as the queer title itself suggested), from that time on I let him know about everything I was doing, showed him what I had been working on and told him what I had in my mind. In return he sent me his manuscripts one after the other, *Der Hofmeister* ('The Private Tutor'), *Der Neue Menoza* ('The New Menoza'), *Die Soldaten* ('The Soldiers'), adaptations from Plautus and the translation from the English that I have already mentioned, which was an appendix to his *Notes on the Theatre*.

I was rather struck by the fact that in a laconic preface to this last-mentioned work he made a remark suggesting that the ideas in the essay, which was a violent attack on the traditional theatre, had already been aired some years earlier, in the form of a lecture to a literary club, in other words, at a time when *Götz* was not yet written. Knowing what I did of Lenz's associates in Strasbourg, I had my doubts about the existence of a literary circle that I had not heard of, however, I let it pass and soon got him a publisher for this and the rest of his work, without having the faintest suspicion that he had picked me out as the chief object of his deluded hate and as the victim of a weird and freakish persecution.

In passing, I should like, for the sake of completeness, to remember a good fellow who counted as one of us, although he had no extraordinary talents. His name was Wagner. He belonged first to our Strasbourg set and then to that in Frankfurt, and was not without wit, talent and education. He seemed to be in search of a serious purpose in life, and so he was welcome. He was a very loyal supporter of mine, too, and because I made no secret of whatever I had in mind, I told him as well as others about the *Faust* I meant to write, and particularly the tragic episode with Gretchen. He took up the idea and turned it into a tragedy, *Die Kindesmörderin* ('The Infanticide'). It was the first time that anyone had grabbed any of my plans from me; it annoyed me, though I bore him no grudge. Since that time I have had plenty of experience of having my brain picked and a march

stolen upon me; and dilly-dallying as I do, and gossiping about all sorts of things I am planning and imagining, I cannot really complain.

As orators and writers enjoy using contrasts, for the sake of the great effect they can produce, even if they have to be hunted out and dragged in, so the author finds it all the pleasanter that he has a sharp contrast ready to hand, as he goes on from Lenz to speak of Klinger. They were contemporaries, and in their youth were friends with the same interests and ambitions. But whereas Klinger was an influential writer and man of affairs whose reputation survives to this day, Lenz was a shooting star, only for a moment passing over the horizon of German literature and suddenly vanishing without leaving any trace in the world.

\* \* \*

It was not long before I came into contact with Lavater\* too. He had been greatly struck with parts of the *Pastor's Letter to his Colleague*;† much of it was exactly what he thought himself. His ceaseless activity soon made our exchange of letters very lively. He was just beginning to make serious studies for his larger work on physiognomy, the introduction to it having been published already. He called upon everyone to send him in drawings, silhouettes and, above all, pictures of Christ, and although there was almost nothing I could do, he insisted on my sending him a drawing of the Saviour as I imagined Him. Such demands for impossibilities gave me opportunities for many a joke, and I could see no way of protecting myself from his eccentricities but by trotting out my own.

There was a very large number of people who did not believe in physiognomy, or at least considered it erratic and misleading; and even many of those who liked Lavater thought it rather a good joke to try him out and, if possible, play a trick on him. He had commissioned a not untalented painter

\* A Swiss clergyman from Zurich, famous for his physiognomical theories (1741-1801).

† A tract written by Goethe and published in 1773.

in Frankfurt to make profiles of several well-known people. The man who sent the pictures off amused himself by first sending Bahrdt's portrait instead of mine, this brought a rollicking but thunderous reply, Lavater making sweeping protests and declarations that this could not be a picture of me—and a great deal else, by the same token, in support of his physiognomic doctrine. He was more inclined to accept my real portrait, when it was forwarded; but this, too, produced an outburst of his feud both with the painters and with their sitters. The painters could never paint realistically and accurately enough for him; and whatever the excellent qualities of the individuals portrayed, they always fell too far short of the ideal he cherished of humanity and human beings for him not to be to some extent repelled by the particularity that makes an individual into a person.

The idea of humanity that had formed in his mind, corresponding to his own pattern of humanity, was so closely related to the living image of Christ in his own mind that it passed his comprehension how a human being could live and breathe without also being a Christian. My relation to the Christian religion lay merely in the mind and emotions, and I had not the slightest notion of that physical affinity to which Lavater inclined. I was therefore irritated at being pestered in this way by a man of his intellectual and emotional qualities, who also set upon Mendelssohn and others, maintaining that one must either be a Christian along with him, a Christian of his sort, or one must bring him over to the other side and convince him of whatever beliefs had brought peace of mind to oneself. This demand, so utterly contrary to the liberal pantheism that I was gradually tending towards more and more, did not make the very best impression on me. All unsuccessful attempts at conversion only make the subject picked on for a proselyte stubborn and obstinate; and this was especially the case with me when Lavater finally confronted me with the harsh ultimatum: "Either a Christian or an atheist!" In answer to this I declared that if he would not let me keep my own idea of Christianity I was quite likely

to go over to atheism, all the more as I could see that nobody really knew what either of them meant.

Violent though it was, this argument carried on by letter did not prevent our being on the best of terms. Lavater was amazingly patient and persistent and had great powers of endurance; he had faith in his theory; and having made up his mind to propagate his own beliefs throughout the world, he fell back on biding his time and going gently where he could not do something by storm.

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Our correspondence had not been going on for long when he announced to me and others that he would soon drop in on us in Frankfurt, as he was making a trip down the Rhine. There was at once great excitement among the public. Everyone was curious to see such a remarkable man. Many people hoped to gain something in the way of moral and religious uplift; the sceptics looked forward to coming out with grave objections; the concerted were certain they would be able to bewilder and dumbfound him with arguments with which they had convinced themselves; and in fact there was every sort of pro and con that a prominent man may expect if he has anything to do with this chequered world.

Our first meeting was enthusiastic. We embraced each other in the friendliest way and I found he looked just like the many pictures I had seen of him. Here was a unique and distinguished individual such as had not been seen before and will not be seen again, and I saw him alive and active before me. Some strange exclamations of his, however, instantly made it clear that I was not what he had expected. In reply I assured him with all that realism of mine, inborn and acquired, that as it had pleased God and nature to make me as I was, we had better make the best of it. And then we came straight to the most important points we had been unable to agree upon in our letters; but we had no chance to go into it all in detail, and I experienced something that I had never come across before.

The rest of us, when we wanted to have a talk about things

of the mind and the emotions, used to slip away from the crowd, in fact away from people altogether, because one finds so many different attitudes and such different degrees of cultivation that it is hard enough to come to an understanding with even a few people. But Lavater went about it quite differently. He loved making his effects on a large scale and was never really happy unless in a crowd; he had a special knack of explaining things to people and keeping them interested, as a result of his genius for physiognomy. He had an almost uncanny gift of being able to tell who and what people were; he could see in a flash what was going on in another person's mind. If in addition to this the other was perfectly frank in expressing his own feelings and was straightforward in his questions, then with all his experience of men's minds and the workings of the world Lavater was always able to give an answer that satisfied everyone. The profound gentleness in his eyes, the marked sweetness of his lips, even the honest-to-goodness Swiss dialect rumbling through his High German, and many more of his peculiarities, were all delightfully soothing to those he spoke to; and his slight stoop, with the sunken chest, did a good deal to counteract his somewhat overpowering presence. He had a very calm, suave way of dealing with presumption and arrogance; while seeming to retreat he would all at once bring out some sublime idea that had never occurred to his narrow-minded opponent, sweeping it forward like a diamond shield and yet shading the light it threw off, making it so mild that such people felt they had learnt something and were convinced at least so long as they were in his company. Perhaps the impression was a lasting one with some. For selfish people are often quite good-natured; it is only a matter of gently opening up the hard husk round the sweet kernel.

But what upset him most was to be with people so ugly that they could not fail to be antagonistic to his theory of the significance of physical appearance. They usually brought a very fair knowledge of human nature into play, as well as any other talents they might have, passionately resent-

ful, making a parade of petty doubts, to disprove a theory that seemed to be such an affront to their own personality. For after all there are not many people of such a sublime turn of mind as Socrates, who would have interpreted his own satyr-like looks as actually being evidence of the moral qualities he had acquired. He found it very hard to put up with the obduracy and pigheadedness of such opponents, and there was a tendency for him to become furious in combating their arguments, just as the smelting-furnace has to breathe fierily on the reluctant ore, as though in utter loathing.

In such circumstances there was no chance of having a private conversation and talking about our own affairs; and although I found it very interesting to observe his way of handling people, I did not profit much from his mind; for my situation was quite different from his. One whose work is of a moral nature makes no effort in vain; much more of it flourishes than the parable of the sower, all too modestly, admits. But the creative artist suffers a complete loss with every one of his works if it is not recognised for what it is. Now, it is generally known how impatient my dear sympathetic readers used to make me and for what reasons I was extremely disinclined to come to terms with them. I now felt all too clearly what a cleft there was between my kind of influence and Lavater's; his had its effect in his presence, mine in my absence; those who were displeased with him from a distance became friends with him when they met him, whereas the people who had assumed from my books that I was likeable, were extremely disappointed when they happened to meet a rigidly forbidding person.

Merck, who had at once come over from Darmstadt, played the Mephistopheles, making particularly scornful witticisms about the intense feminine interest in Lavater; and when some ladies were investigating the rooms put at the prophet's disposal and taking a special interest in his bedroom, the ribald fellow said: "These pious souls were resolved to see where they had laid the body of their Lord." In spite of all this, however, he had to let himself be exorcised, just like all the

others. For Lips, who was travelling with Lavater, drew his profile — just as accurate a resemblance as all the portraits of eminent men and others that were later to be collected in the great work on physiognomy.

For me personally this acquaintance with Lavater was extremely important and instructive. His intensely stimulating talk set my tranquil, artistically contemplative mind working. Candidly, it was not to my immediate advantage, since it only increased the distraction to which I was already a victim, but we had come to speak of so many things that I felt a tremendous longing to continue our conversations. So I decided to accompany him when he went to Ems, to be shut in the carriage with him, cut off from the world, and so able to talk at ease about the things that lay close to both our hearts.

In the meantime I found the conversations between Lavater and Fraulein von Klettenberg very remarkable and interesting. Here were two definite Christians, face to face, and one could see quite clearly how one and the same creed was transformed in the minds of different people. It was so often repeated in those tolerant days that everyone had his own religion, his own way of worshipping God. And although I did not precisely assert that, I certainly did notice in the present case that men and women have need of different Saviours.

Fraulein von Klettenberg's relationship to hers was as to a lover, an unreserved abandon, he being her only hope and joy, in whose hands she placed her life and destiny, without doubt or hesitation. Lavater, on the other hand, treated his as a friend whom one emulated, affectionately and unenviably, acknowledging and admiring his good qualities, on account of which one tries to be like him and even to come to equal him. What a difference there was between these two attitudes! It summed up the spiritual needs of the two sexes. It may also go some way to explain why the more feminine type of men have turned, as Sannazaro\* did, to the Mother of

\* Italian poet of the Renaissance, author of the pastoral *Arcadia*



God as the model of womanly beauty and virtue, dedicating their life and genius to her, though they also played, as though incidentally, with the divine Boy.

It was not only from being present during their conversations that I came to know how my two friends got on with each other; each of them also confided in me privately. I could not completely agree with either of them: my own Christ, too, had assumed his form according to my own way of feeling and thinking. But as they refused to admit mine any validity whatsoever, I used to tease them with all sorts of paradoxes and preposterous fancies, and when they were beginning to grow restive, I slipped away with a little joke.

The quarrel between knowledge and faith was not yet the order of the day, but these two words and the notions bound up with them did crop up from time to time; and the thorough-going cynics declared one was as unreliable as the other. Hence it amused me to speak up for both sides, without, however, being able to win either of my friends' approval. In the matter of faith, I said, all that mattered was *that* one believed; *what* one believed was completely beside the point. Faith, I said, was a grand sense of security as to the present and the future, and this security arose from trusting in a supernaturally great, supernaturally mighty and inscrutable Being. Everything depended on this trust's being unshakable; but how we imagined this Being was something that depended on our other faculties, even on circumstances, and simply did not matter. Faith was a sacred vessel in which everyone was prepared to sacrifice his emotions, reason and imagination, to the best of his ability. With knowledge it was just the opposite; it was not a matter merely of *knowing* something, but of *what* one knew, how *well* one knew it and how *much* one knew. Hence one could argue about knowledge, because it could be corrected, extended and narrowed down. Knowledge, I contended, was something that had its beginnings in the particular, was infinite and formless and could never be summed up, unless perhaps intuitively, and so must remain the complete opposite of faith.

Half-truths of this kind, and the confusion arising from them, may be stimulating and amusing when presented as poetic fancies; but in real life they are a source of disturbance and bewilderment in conversation. I was therefore glad to leave Lavater alone with all the people who wanted to elevate their minds by his example and in his company, thinking to compensate myself for this renunciation by the journey we were going to make to Ems together.

We had fine summer weather for our journey. Lavater was cheerful and altogether enchanting. For though his pre-occupations were religious and moral, he was far from being timid and was quite capable of enjoying the sort of ordinary things that arouse brisk, merry feelings in most people. He was witty and amusing and interested in everything; he liked other people to be the same, so long as it all kept within the limits prescribed by his exquisitely sensitive views. In the case of anyone's presuming beyond those limits, he had a way of tapping one on the shoulder and recalling the rash sinner to propriety with a stout exclamation of: "Come, be a good lad!" This journey taught me a great deal and woke me up to a great many things, though more through my getting to know his character than in any training of mine. In Ems he was immediately again surrounded by all sorts of people, and I went back to Frankfurt because my own modest affairs were in a state that I could not leave them in for long.

\* \* \*

[*In Frankfurt Goethe fell once more under the influence of the pious Fräulein von Klettenberg, and projected poems on the subjects of "Prometheus," "The Wandering Jew," and a play about Mahomet. Only fragments were completed. An invitation to attach himself to the court of Weimar was refused under paternal pressure.*]

ONE evening [*in the winter of 1774-5*] a friend asked me to go with him to a small concert, which was being given in the house of a prominent Calvinist banker.\* It was already late, but as I loved doing things on the spur of the moment, I went with him, being well-dressed, as usual. We entered a large room, actually a drawing-room, on the ground floor. There was quite a crowd, and in the centre of the room was a grand piano, at which the banker's only daughter now sat down and played, with considerable skill and charm. I was standing at the bass end of the keyboard, in order to have a good view of her figure and general air. There was something childlike in her manner; and the movements she had to make in playing were light and easy.

When the sonata was over, she came over to me, where I stood by the piano. We exchanged greetings without having time to saying anything more, for a quartet had just begun. At the end I drew somewhat closer to her and made some agreeable remarks, saying how glad I was that our first meeting should also have made me acquainted with her talent. She replied very gracefully, and we both remained standing where we were. I could not fail to notice that she gazed at me very attentively and that I was actually on show here, which it was all the easier for me to put up with as I was also given something very charming to gaze at. So we looked at each other, and I will not deny that I seemed to feel a power of attraction of the gentlest kind. The comings and goings among the party, and the entertainments provided, did however prevent any other form of closer approach that evening. Yet I must confess to having had a pleasant feeling when, as I said goodbye, the mother gave me to understand that they hoped to see me again soon, and the daughter

\* The banker was Lili's mother, Frau Schonemann, née d'Orville, who carried on her dead husband's business. Lili was sixteen.

seemed to fall in with this suggestion in quite a friendly way. I did not fail to repeat my visit after suitable intervals, and our talk was of a cheerful, interesting kind that did not seem to bode any passionate relationship.

\* \* \*

When I take up the story of my relationship with Lili once again, I have to remind myself that the hours I spent either in her mother's presence or alone with her were some of the pleasantest I have ever known. On account of my writings I was generally supposed to know something about the human heart, as it used to be called then, and from this point of view our conversations were of great moral interest.

But how could anyone discuss the emotions without revealing something of his own inner life? It was not long before a quiet hour came when Lili told me the story of her childhood. She had grown up in the enjoyment of all social advantages and worldly pleasures. She described her brothers and her relations, as well as their domestic circumstances; only her mother remained in revered obscurity.

She did not overlook small foibles and so could not deny that she had not been able to help noticing a gift of attraction she had, and together with it a way of dropping people. So, talking this over, for and against, we reached the delicate point that she had used this gift on me, but had been punished by being attracted to me herself.

These confessions came from a nature so pure and childlike that, listening to them, I became utterly devoted to her.

There came to be a mutual need, a habit of seeing each other. But how many a day, how many an evening, far into the night, I would have had to do without her, if I had not been able to bring myself to see her among her friends! This was a source of much distress to me.

My relationship to her was as though to a beautiful, charming and cultivated daughter. It was like my earlier love-affairs, yet still more sublime. However, I had not thought of external things and the mixing and constant reshuffling involved in a social life. What dominated us was an irresistible desire; I

could not do without her, nor she without me. But being surrounded by all the people who made up her circle and exposed to interference from them, how often our days turned out a failure, how many hours went wrong!

There were picnics that turned out to be a disaster; there was a tardy brother, with whom I was to come along afterwards, who first had to do some things that he did with the greatest languor, I do not know whether maliciously or not, so spoiling the whole outing, which had been so well planned; and other arrivals or failures to arrive, impatience and gnawing absence — all such troubles, which would certainly find sympathetic readers if they were described in more detail in a novel, I must here leave on one side. But in order to give life to this musing description, to lend it something of youthful emotion, perhaps I may here slip in some songs which, although they are known, may make a special impression at this point:

Heart, my heart, what is this feeling?  
What doth weigh on thee so sore?  
What new life art thou revealing,  
That I scarcely know thee more?  
Gone is all that once was dearest,  
Gone the care that once was nearest,  
Gone the labour, gone the bliss,  
Ah, how couldst thou come to this?

Does that bloom so fresh and youthful,  
That divine and lovely form,  
That sweet look, so good and truthful,  
Bind thee with resistless charm?  
If I swear no more to see her,  
If I man myself and flee her,  
Soon I find my efforts vain,  
Forced to seek her once again.

She with magic thread has bound me,  
That defies my strength or skill,

She has drawn a circle round me,  
Holds me fast against my will.  
Cruel maid, her charms enslave me,  
I must live as she would have me,  
Ah, how great the change to me!  
Love, when wilt thou set me free!

\*                      \*

With resistless power why dost thou draw me  
Into scenes so bright?  
Had I not—poor lad—so much to charm me  
In the lonely night?

In my little room alone and secret,  
While the moon's bright beams  
In a shimmering light fell softly on me,  
As I lay in dreams,

Dreaming through the golden hours of rapture  
Soothed my heart to rest,  
While I felt thine image, like a treasure,  
Deep within my breast.

Can it be I sit at yonder table,  
Gay with cards and lights,  
Opposite intolerable faces,  
Because 'tis *she* invites?

Alas, the gentle bloom of spring no longer  
Cheereth my poor heart.  
There is only spring, and love, and nature,  
Angel, where thou art!

If these songs are carefully read aloud, or better still if they are sung with feeling, I am sure a breath of those richly happy hours will stir the air.

But let us not take too hasty leave of that greater, brilliant company without first adding a few observations and, especially, explaining the end of the second poem.

The girl I was used to seeing only in her simple house-frock, which she seldom changed, now came towards me in all the brilliant elegance of a fashionable gown; and yet she was just the same. Her grace and friendliness were still the same, only it seemed that her power of attraction was intensified.

Either because she had so many people about her here, which made her express herself more vivaciously and, as it were, multiply herself, showing herself from various sides according to the person whom she was speaking to, or however it was, I could not deny that although from one point of view I found these strangers a nuisance, yet I would not have missed the joy of getting to know her social virtues and seeing that she was fitted for a wider, more public life.

And yet this bosom, now hidden under silks and jewellery, was the same that had opened its innermost secrets to me, the same into which I had seen as clearly as into my own. These lips were the very same that had so early described how she had grown up and how she had spent her years. Each glance exchanged, each accompanying smile spoke of a noble tacit understanding, and even here amid this throng I was amazed at the secret, innocent agreement that had been reached in the most human and natural way in the world.

Yet as spring drew on, the greater liberty in keeping with country life was to tie those bonds still tighter. Offenbach-am-Main\* even then showed signs of developing into the town that it was to be in the future. Beautiful houses, quite magnificent for that time, had sprung up already; Uncle Bernard,† as he was called in the family and as I shall call him, too, lived in the largest; next came extensive factory buildings; d'Orville, a lively and very likeable young man, lived opposite. Gardens round the houses, terraces extending down to the Main and giving an uninterrupted view of the lovely scenery round about, all were an immediate and lasting source of delight to the visitor. And the lover could not find a more delicious setting for his feelings.

\* A few miles only from Frankfurt

† Lili's uncle.

I lodged in the house of Johann André, and as I have to mention the name of this man, who later became fairly well known, I must make a little excursion in order to give some idea of the state of opera at that time.

Marchand then managed the theatre in Frankfurt, and he tried to do everything he could by his own efforts. He was a tall, handsome man in the prime of life, with something predominantly leisurely and soft about him, all of which made his appearance on the stage rather pleasant. He probably had about as much of a voice as was then generally called for in the performance of musical works and so he was eager to put on the smaller and greater French operas.

He was particularly successful as the father in Grétry's opera *Beauty and the Beast*, in which he struck very expressive attitudes in the vision produced behind the veil.

This opera, very good of its kind, made some approach to the grand manner and was the sort of thing to arouse romantic emotions. However, the demon of realism had seized the operatic theatre, and topical operas about trades and craftsmen were what held sway. *The Huntsmen*, *The Cooper* and I know not what else had already been performed; André settled on *The Potter*. He had written the libretto himself and expended all his musical talent on his own text.

I had lodgings in his house and only want to say as much about this always skilful poet and composer as is necessary here.

He was a man of naturally lively genius, actually settled in Offenbach as a mechanic and manufacturer; he was midway between a conductor and a dilettante. In the hope of becoming the former, he exerted himself seriously to get a real grip on music; as the latter he was inclined to go on repeating his compositions indefinitely.

Among the people who belonged to the circle and contributed much to its liveliness there was Pastor Ewald. Witty and cheerful in company, in private he quietly went on with the studies proper to his duties and station; later, indeed, he achieved renown within the limits of the theological field. He



must not be overlooked here, as being an indispensable, receptive and convivial member of that circle.

Lili's piano-playing quite enslaved our good André to our company. Teaching, directing and performing, there were few hours of the day or night when he did not join in our domestic activities and the sociable round of the days.

Bürger's ballad, *Lenore*, which was then quite new, had been given an enthusiastic reception by the Germans. He set it to music and enjoyed playing it over and over again.

I, too, being fond of reciting (which I did a great deal, with much vigour) was always ready to speak it; in those days, people were not yet bored by endless repetitions of the same thing. If the choice was left to the company as to which of the two of us they would like to hear, they often decided in my favour.

But however these things might be, they all only served to prolong the time the lovers spent together, who could not bring these hours to a close. One or other of the couple would easily keep their good Johann André in continual motion, luring him on to repeat his music over and over again until midnight. So the two lovers made sure of being together, as they so longed and needed to be.

Coming out of the house early in the morning, one was in the freshest of fresh air, though not exactly in the country. There were fine houses, which at that time would have done honour to a city; gardens spreading out terrace-wise, with smooth flower-beds and ornamental rock-gardens; a wide view across the river to the farther bank; often, even at this early hour, a busy fleet of rafts and market-boats and barges; a world alive, gently sloping away from the beholder, all of it in harmony with sweet and tender feelings. Even the lonely ripples and reedy whisperings of the quiet river flowing by became enchantment, casting a tranquillising spell over anyone who passed that way. A serene sky, in the loveliest season of the year, was a vault over this whole scene—and how pleasantly an affectionate gathering of friends would meet again each morning, in such a landscape!

Yet lest any grave reader should think such a manner of life too facile, even frivolous, let him consider that between the things here all described as one, for the sake of the story, there were odious days and weeks of enforced absence, with other purposes and other activities and insufferable boredom, too.

Both the men and the women were brisk and busy in the circle of their duties. Nor did I fail to discharge my responsibilities, thinking of the present and the future, and still found time enough to do the things to which my talent and my passion irresistibly urged me on

The earliest morning hours I devoted to poetry; the advancing day belonged to worldly business, which was treated in a quite special way. My father, a sound and even elegant jurist, himself conducted what business arose from the administration of his own property and his relations with esteemed friends; and although his function as Imperial counsellor did not allow him to practise, he did act as legal adviser to many a close friend, the briefs he prepared being signed by a recognised advocate, who was naturally not the loser as a result.

This activity of his had if anything increased since I joined him, and I observed that he had a higher regard for my talent than for my practice and so did everything to leave me time enough for my poetic studies and work. Thorough and efficient as he was, though slow in thinking and working out his ideas, he studied the documents confidentially and then when we met he presented the case to me and I completed it with an ease that caused him the greatest of delight as a father. Once, indeed, he even went so far as to say that if I had been a stranger he would have envied me

In order to lighten the burden of this business still further, we had taken on a secretary; an exact portrayal of his character and manners could easily make an entertaining element in a novel. After he had done well at school, where he made himself perfect in Latin and acquired a number of other useful accomplishments, a somewhat too frivolous student-life inter-

rupted his career; for a while he managed to drag along, ill in body, and only later bettered himself by means of his very beautiful handwriting and his quickness at arithmetic. Being employed by several lawyers, he gradually made himself familiar with the formalities of legal procedure and obtained employment and a good reputation because of his efficiency and reliability. He had taken employment with us, too, and was always on hand when there was legal business or accounts to be done.

This man now looked after our ever-extending business, which was concerned with legal affairs as well as with various sorts of commissions, agencies and transport. He knew all the little ways at the Town Hall like the back of his hand; in both the burgomaster's offices he was well liked; and as many among the new councillors, some of whom were soon elevated to be magistrates, had been known to him from those early days of their entering into office when they were still unsure of themselves, he had gained a certain trust which might even be called a form of influence. He knew how to turn this to account on behalf of his patrons, and as his health made it necessary for him to work slowly and carefully, he was always ready to carry out commissions conscientiously.

He had quite a pleasant appearance, being slender of figure, with regular features. He was not pushing in manner, and yet there was an air of confidence about him, for he knew just what had to be done, and he was cheerful and deft in dealing with difficulties. He must have been in the late forties, and I am still sorry (I dare say I may repeat what I said before) that I never fitted him into a story as the main-spring of the works.

In the hope of having more or less satisfied my more serious readers by this account, perhaps I may now turn once more to those brilliant peaks, those days when friendship and love shone in their loveliest light.

It lies, of course, in the nature of such relationships that birthdays should be celebrated conscientiously, merrily and with much variety of entertainment. It was in honour of

Pastor Ewald's birthday that the following song was composed:

When met in glad communion,  
When warmed by love and wine,  
To sing this song in union,  
Our voices we'll combine.  
Through God, Who first united,  
Together we remain;  
The flame that He once lighted,  
He now revives again.

As this song has survived to the present day and there is hardly ever a frolicsome party that gathers for supper without its being joyfully remembered, we recommend it to posterity and wish all those who say or sing it the same heart-felt delight and good cheer that we felt in those days, without thought of any further world, feeling our own little circle extending to the dimensions of a world on its own.

But now it will be expected that Lili's birthday, which came round for the seventeenth time on the 23rd June, 1775,\* was to be specially celebrated. She had promised to come to Offenbach at noon, and I must admit that our friends had all agreed, as though by inspiration, to put aside all traditional complimentary phraseology for that occasion, and they had prepared for her reception and entertainment only with little acts of affection such as she deserved.

Being occupied with such pleasant duties, I saw the sun set, promising a fine day on the morrow, with a gay, brilliant atmosphere for our party. And then Lili's brother George, who could never conceal his feelings, burst into the room somewhat violently and blurted out the news that our celebration the next day was to be upset. He himself did not know how or why, but his sister sent a message that it was utterly impossible for her to come to Offenbach at midday to the party in her honour; she hoped that she would be able to get there by evening. She did understand how tiresome this must

\* There is clearly some inaccuracy here, for on this date Goethe was already in Switzerland, as witness the opening of the next section.

be for me and our friends, but she begged and implored me to invent something to soften the blow, which she left it to me to announce; she assured me of her gratitude.

I was silent for a moment, then instantly I had collected my thoughts and, as though by divine inspiration, found the answer. "Quick, George!" I exclaimed. "Tell her she can be quite easy in her mind and must manage to come in the evening. Tell her I promise to turn this very calamity into a celebration."

The boy was curious to know how. I stoutly refused to tell him, although he brought into play all the tricks and all the violence generally arrogated to himself by the brother of the girl we love.

The moment he had gone I began walking up and down my room with strange complacency. And with the gay, free feeling that here was a brilliant chance to prove myself devoted to her, I bound several quires of paper together in a pretty silk cover, as is proper for an occasional poem, and hastened to write the title:

"SHE IS NOT COMING!

"A pitiable domestic piece that is to be performed, heaven have pity on us, in Offenbach-am-Main on the 23rd June, 1775, in the most natural manner. The duration of the action is from morning until evening."

Neither the draft nor the fair copy of this piece of foolery now exists and I have often enquired about it, but have never been able to discover any trace of it. So I must rhyme it together all over again, which is not, on the whole, very difficult.

The scene is d'Orville's house and garden in Offenbach. The play is opened by the servants, each of whom plays his part exactly as in real life, and the preparations for the party become apparent. The children join in, just as in real life; then the master and the lady of the house, in their own capacities and with their own occupations; then, when everyone is bustling about, very busy and in rather a hurry, that indefatigable neighbour, the composer Hans André, comes in.

He sits down at the piano and calls to them all to listen to his birthday song, which he has just finished and wants to try out. He gets everyone in the house gathered around him, but then they all scatter again to go about various urgent little jobs. One calls another away, and yet another is wanted by someone else, and the gardener's arrival in the midst of all this directs attention to the garden and water scenes; there are garlands too, intertwined with ribbons bearing dainty inscriptions. Nothing is forgotten.

Just as everyone has gathered round about the most delightful of these things, a messenger enters. He, being a kind of comical errand-boy, was also entitled to a "character" part; many extravagant tips had given him a general idea of what was going on. He was very pleased with his errand, which he hoped would earn him sandwiches and a glass of wine, and after some mischievous reluctance he handed over an express message. The master of the house let his arms sink, the paper fluttered to the floor, and he exclaimed: "Let me get to the table! Let me get to the sideboard and *sweep* something!"

One of the characteristic things about lively social intercourse between people with a gusto for living is that they evolve a symbolism of their own in words and gestures. So a sort of thieves' slang comes into existence, highly satisfactory to the initiate and by strangers either unnoticed or, if noticed, a source of annoyance to them.

One of Lili's most delightful peculiarities was that expressed, in word and gesture, as *sweeping*. It occurred when something improper was said or discussed, especially if the company were at table or near any flat surface.

It had its origin in an infinitely winsome little bit of naughtiness on her part, committed once when a stranger sitting beside her at dinner made some indecorous remark. Without any change of expression on her lovely face, she swept her right hand across the table, with one of her attractive gestures, calmly pushing everything she encircled with this gentle movement on to the floor. Down it all went—knife, fork, bread, salt-cellar, and something belonging to her neighbour

as well. Everyone was startled, the footmen rushed to the spot, and nobody knew what it was all about but for those observant enough to have noticed, who were delighted that she had found such a graceful way of dealing with an impropriety and cancelling it out.

So here was a symbol for the rejection of anything unpleasant, such as does, after all, sometimes occur among good, honest, worthy, well-meaning people who are not, however, quite as cultivated as they might be. We had all adopted the movement of the right hand as a sign of rejecting something; she herself had afterwards allowed herself only a very moderate measure of real "sweeping," as much as was in keeping with good taste.

So now, when the poet made the master of the house mimic this desire to *sweep*, a habit that had become second nature with us, everyone will realise how significant and effective it was: for while he was threatening to sweep everything off all the tables and so on, everyone else tried to stop him and soothe him down, until at last he sank back in a chair, quite at the end of his tether.

"What has happened?" was the cry. "Is she ill? Has someone died?"

"Read it! Read it!" d'Orville exclaimed. "There it is, on the floor."

The express message was picked up and read and everyone exclaimed: "She is not coming!"

The great fright had prepared everyone for a greater. But now it turned out that she was quite well! Nothing had happened to her! Nobody in the family had been injured in any way! There was hope for that evening!

André, who had gone on playing all this time, at last came hurrying along too, trying to console the others and himself as well. Pastor Ewald and his wife also entered in a characteristic way, disappointed and yet reasonable, sorry to miss Lili and yet restrained and full of understanding. But everything went on in a jolly, topsy-turvy way, until Uncle Bernard came on the scene, a model of calm, looking forward to a

good luncheon, an enjoyably festive midday meal, the only one of the whole party who saw the thing from the right point of view, uttering soothing, sensible speeches and restoring everything to a proper balance, just as in Greek tragedy the *deus ex machina* appears at the end to utter a few words unravelling the tangles in which the chief protagonists are involved.

All this was written during the night, the pen careering over the paper at top speed. Then it was handed to a messenger, who was instructed to arrive in Offenbach with this express message on the stroke of ten the next morning.

I awoke in bright daylight and saw to it that I arrived in Offenbach by midday.

I was hailed by the queerest turmoil of protesting cries. Hardly a thought was given to the upset celebrations, and everyone was cross, scolding me for having hit them off so well. The servants were quite pleased at appearing on the same stage with the master and mistress. Only the children, the most downright and incorruptible realists, doggedly stuck to their declaration that they had never talked like that and that everything had been quite different from the way it was written down here. I soothed them with some little bribes from the dessert, and they were as fond of me as ever. A gay luncheon and a tuning-down of the festivities put us all in the right mood to look forward to welcoming Lili without pomp but perhaps, for all that, all the more affectionately. When she came she was welcomed by cheerful, smiling faces and was almost taken aback that her absence had not depressed us more. She was told the whole story, and the whole performance was repeated for her benefit. And then she thanked me, in her dear, sweet way, as only she could.

It needed no special perspicacity to see that what had kept her away from the party in her honour was no mere accident, but heated discussion about our relationship. However, this had not the slightest effect either on our feelings or on our behaviour.

At this season of the year the country was bound to be



crowded with people pouring out of town. It was often quite late in the evening when I joined the party, where I found her doing her best to seem interested in her social obligations. As I put in an appearance only for a few hours, I was glad of any chance to make myself useful by doing some errand, large or small, or taking a message for her. Indeed, I dare say such homage and service is the most delightful thing that one can experience, and that is the impression obscurely but potently conveyed by the romances of olden chivalry. There was no concealing the fact that I was her liegeman, and there was no reason why she should not have exulted in this power over me, it being a victory for both conqueror and conquered, both of us glorying in it equally.

The fact that I came often, but usually only for a short time, made my presence all the more effective. Johann André always had a supply of music. I, too, brought new things, my own and other people's; poetry and music were always showering down on us, like blown rose-petals. It was altogether a glorious time; a certain exaltation reigned in all our spirits, and we never stumbled on a prosaic moment. There is no doubt at all that this was a contagion spreading among the others, originating in our love-affair. For where love and passion assume their own audacious rights, they breathe courage into shyer souls, who now no longer understand why they should make a secret of their own equal rights. So one began to be aware of more or less hidden liaisons, which now wormed their way out into the daylight; others, which could not very well be openly admitted, crept along quite comfortably under cover.

Now, although I could not spend my days out there in the country with Lili, because of the increasing amount of business I had, the gay evenings afforded every opportunity for long hours together in the open air. Those who are in love themselves will have a sympathetic appreciation of the following episode.

It was the state of which it is written: "Although I sleep, my heart is awake." The hours of daylight and of darkness

seemed the same. The radiance of day could not outshine the radiance of love, and the aureole of our passion turned night into the splendour of day.

We had been strolling about the countryside until late, under the clearest of starry skies; and after I had escorted her and the rest of the party to their various doors, taking leave of her last of all, I felt so very far from sleep that I set off for another walk on my own. I took the high road to Frankfurt, abandoning myself to my thoughts and hopes. Then I sat down on a bench in the sheer stillness of the night, under the incandescent firmament of stars, to meditate on myself and her.

I was struck by a mysterious noise quite near to me. It was neither a crackling nor a rustling. After listening carefully for some time I realised that it came from under the ground and must be the burrowing of some little animal, perhaps a hedgehog or a weasel or whatever sort of animals set about such business at such an hour.

After that I walked further on towards the town until I came to the Roderberg, where I recognised the chalk-white glimmer of the steps leading up to the vineyards. I climbed up there, sat down and fell asleep.

When I woke again dawn was already breaking. I found I was opposite the high wall that had once in ancient times been built as a fortification against attack from the hills opposite. Sachsenhausen was there ahead, and a faint mist gave a hint of where the river lay. The air was enjoyably keen.

There I lingered until the sun, rising behind me, gradually spread its light over the whole view. This was the countryside where I would see my sweetheart again; and I turned slowly back towards the paradise where she still lay sleeping.

But the more I exerted myself to extend the scope of our growing business and to master it myself, out of love for her, the less frequent my visits to Offenbach inevitably became. This naturally caused some misery, which only went to show

that in trying to do everything for the future one can subordinate things of the present and so lose them.

As my prospects were gradually improving, I took them for better than they really were and began to think of coming to a decision, all the more as such a public relationship could not be continued much longer without embarrassment. As generally happens in such cases, we did not actually speak of these things to each other. But the sense of boundless delight in each other's company, the intense conviction that parting would be impossible, our entire and equal trust in each other, all this made everything very grave for me—for I had determined not to get involved in any long-drawn-out relationship again and here I was now entangled in this one without any certainty of its ending happily—that I was in a bemused state from which I tried to escape by immersing myself more and more in worldly business that I did not care about, although I hoped that it would bring profit and satisfaction in my union with the girl I loved.

In this queer state—the like of which many other people may also have experienced, painfully enough—a friend of the family came to our help, a woman who had a very clear insight into all the relations between persons and circumstances. She was known as *Demoiselle Delf*. Together with her elder sister she managed a small business in Heidelberg and had on various occasions had cause for gratitude to Herr *Schönemann's* large bank in Frankfurt. She had known and loved *Lili* from childhood. An odd person she was, with a severe, mannish appearance and a quick, regular, heavy tread; she had had to make her own way in the world and so knew something of it, at least in a certain sense. She could not be said to be really given to intrigue; it was her way to spend a long time just watching how things were going and keeping her ideas about it all to herself until she saw her opportunity, as she had the knack of doing and when she saw people's feelings hovering between doubt and certainty and everything depended on a rapid decision, she could put her case so vigorously that she rarely failed to carry the day. Really she

had no egotistical ends in view; it was reward enough for her to know she had done something, pulled something off, especially if she had brought about a marriage. She had long realised how things stood with us and had investigated the situation on her various visits, until she had finally become convinced that this was a genuine love and the relationship, which was sound enough but not properly encouraged, must be given a helping hand and the little romance carried along to a suitable happy ending.

She had been on intimate terms with Lili's mother for many years. I introduced her to my family and she managed to make my parents like her; precisely that sort of dour character fits in very well in the independent atmosphere of an Imperial city and, when combined with intelligence, is even most welcome. She was well aware of our wishes and hopes; with her taste for taking a hand in other people's affairs, she saw a mission for herself and opened negotiations with our parents. I do not know how she set about it or how she overcame the obstacles in her way; but the long and the short of it was that she came in to see us one evening bringing our parents' consent. "Join hands with one another!" she cried, in her melodramatically imperious way. I stood facing Lili and held out my hand; and she laid hers in it, not faltering, it is true, but rather slowly. After a deep sigh we flung our arms round each other in rapture.

It was a strange decision on the part of the high powers ruling over us that in the course of my curious career through life I should also learn what it is like to be a young man engaged to be married.

I think I may say that this is the pleasantest of all memories for a man of settled years and habits. It is enjoyable to go back over those emotions that can hardly be expressed and almost not be explained at all. One is in an utterly changed state, the most glaring contradictions are removed, the most obstinate conflicts resolved; the clamourings of sensuality, reason's everlasting warnings, the tyranny of the instincts, the law of commonsense, all of which at other times involve us

in an endless feud, now join together in cordial unity. And when the solemn rite is publicly celebrated, what was taboo is now demanded of one and the forbidden thing exalted into an indispensable duty.

But it will be a cause of moral satisfaction to my readers to hear that from that moment on, a certain change of attitude took place in me. Up till now I had regarded my lovely Lili as beautiful, graceful, and attractive, but now she also seemed dignified and distinguished. She acquired a double personality: her grace and charm were mine, I could feel, as ever; but the solid worth of her character, her self-possession and reliability in all things remained her own. I observed it, considered it and rejoiced in it, as in a capital providing interest of which I too would share in the benefits all my lifetime.

It has long ago been said, and with good reason, that one cannot remain for long on the crest of the wave. Both our parents' agreement, having been wrung from them by *Demoiselle Delf*, was now recognised as official, tacitly and without further formality. But as soon as something ideal, such as this kind of engagement actually is, becomes a reality and everything seems to be quite settled, a crisis arises. The external world is utterly merciless, and rightly so: for it must assert itself, once and for all. Love's confidence in itself is great, but we do, all the same, often see it come to grief on the rocks of reality. Young prospective husbands inadequately supplied with worldly goods, and particularly in these modern times, need not expect to enter on a honeymoon: they are immediately threatened by a world of inexorable demands, and a failure to satisfy these demands puts a young married couple in an awkward position.

As the means that I had concentrated on using had sufficed up to a certain point, it was some time before I became aware of their inadequacy for my purpose. But now that the goal was drawing nearer, it seemed that ends would not meet.

The illusion that love finds so convenient was gradually wearing thin. A sober survey now had to be made of my

household, my domestic situation, in detail and in general; and all this was done in the awareness that a daughter-in-law was of course expected. But the question was: what kind of young woman was she to be?

We got to know her at the end of Volume III,\* with her restraint, understanding and sweetness, her beauty and her accomplishments, her even temper, affection and serenity. She was the fitting keystone to an arch already built up and almost complete. But now, considering the situation calmly and without prejudice, one could no longer deny that in order to establish the new bride in this function of a keystone here, one would have to build a new arch in proportion.

Meanwhile I had not yet realised all this, nor had she. And yet when I considered myself in my house and thought of bringing her home there, I could not help feeling that she did not fit in. I myself time and again had to change my style of dress in order not to look odd among the fashionably smart people in her circle. But that could not very well be done with domestic arrangements, in a newly-built, handsome, private house, where a kind of elegance no longer up to date had kept the place somehow behind the times.

So, too, even after permission had been granted, there had been no way of bringing our parents into closer touch and establishing a family relationship. Different religious beliefs† mean different manners and customs. And if the dear girl meant to go on leading her own life to some extent, here she would find no scope, however respectable and spacious the house was.

Although I had overlooked all this previously, now I was able to feel easier and more confident when other people's influence opened up fine prospects of a flourishing position for me. Mentally active people can always get a foothold in the world. Ability and talent arouse confidence; and every-

\* In the autumn of 1774, Goethe's mother seems to have chosen a bride for him from amongst the circle in which he moved. Anna Sibylla Munch was his partner in one of the marriage games they played, but Goethe was not disposed to turn the game into reality.

† The Schonemann family were Calvinists, the Goethes Lutheran.

one thinks it is all just a matter of going in a different direction. Glamorous youth finds favour; and people expect everything from genius, although there is only a certain amount that it can achieve.

German intellectual and literary life at that time was nothing more or less than a field that needed to be ploughed up and cultivated afresh. Among men in public life there were shrewd people who wished to see thorough-going farmers and shrewd husbandmen tending the newly-ploughed ground. Even the highly-respected and firmly-founded lodge of free-masons, whose leading members I had got to know through my relationship to Lili, found suitable ways of preparing me for closer touch with them. But out of a sense of independence, which I later looked back on as madness, I turned down every attempt at a closer association, not realising that these men, although they did acknowledge a higher allegiance, would inevitably have been useful to me in furthering my own ends, so very similar to theirs.

Now let me return to the chief matter in hand.

In cities like Frankfurt there are collective offices, such as consulates and agencies, which can be infinitely extended if one is sufficiently enterprising. Something of the kind was offered to me, and at a first glance it seemed likely to be both profitable and dignified. It was assumed that I would be suitable; and it would indeed have fulfilled the conditions of that official trinity\* already described. In such a case one does not admit one's own doubts even to one's self, dwelling on the favourable aspect of things and overcoming all one's hesitation by being violently energetic, all of which lends the state of affairs an element of the not quite genuine, without it necessarily diminishing one's passion.

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*[Goethe was just considering the experiment of trying to 'renounce' Lili, when the brothers Stolberg and another young aristocrat arrived in Frankfurt, and relieved him of his difficult decision by bearing him off to Switzerland.]*

\* The burgomaster, the magistrates and the guildsmen of Frankfurt.

# SWITZERLAND

ON the 16th June, 1775 (this is the first date I find a note of), we\* set out on a strenuous journey. There were wild, craggy heights to be crossed, and all around the most utter solitude and desolation. At a quarter to eight that evening we were facing the Schwyzer Hacken, huge twin peaks towering into the sky. Here for the first time we found snow underfoot, and on those jagged crests of rock it lay as it had lain since the previous winter. An ancient pine wood lay, grave and frightful, in the depths of the ravines into which we would have to descend. After a short rest, refreshed and jaunty to the point of rashness, we went leaping down the footpath that plunged from cliff to cliff and from ledge to ledge, and at ten o'clock reached Schwyz. Now we were at once tired and wide awake, tottering with exhaustion and yet wildly excited; hastily we quenched our violent thirst and then felt more ecstatic than ever. Think of the young man who had written *Werther* about two years ago, think of a younger friend of his who had already been set aflame by reading the manuscript of that wonderful work, both involuntarily transported, as it were, into a natural condition, vividly recalling passions now past and gone, yearning for those of the present, making plans that had neither rhyme nor reason, exulting in the sensation of easy power with which they roamed the realm of fancy—and then you have some idea of the state of mind we were in, which I would have no way of describing if my diary did not have the note. "Laughter and jubilation lasting till midnight."

On the morning of the 17th we saw the Schwyzer Hacken from our windows. Masses upon masses of clouds were piling up the sides of these huge, irregular natural pyramids. Leaving Schwyz about one in the afternoon, we set off for the Rigi.

\* Goethe was travelling with Passavant, a young Frankfurt friend then living in Zurich.



At two o'clock there was brilliant sunshine on the Lake of Lucerne. Quite dazzled with bliss, we saw nothing. Two sturdy girls managed the boat; it was so charming that we gladly left it to them. When we reached the island, they told us that it was here the tyrannical governor lived in olden times. However that might be, now the hermit's cabin nestled among the ruins.

We climbed the Rigi. About half-past seven we were standing beside the Mother of God in the snow. Then on past the chapel, past the monastery, to spend the night at the Ox Inn.

Sunday, the 18th, in the morning, sketched the chapel from the Ox. At noon to the Kalten Bad\* or the Three Sisters Well. By a quarter-past two we had climbed the height, only to find ourselves in the clouds, doubly disagreeable now, blotting out the view and also drenching us in a sort of trickling mist. But when there was a gap here and there and we could gaze through this heaving frame down on to a clear, splendid world bathed in sunshine, we stopped, regretting the hazards of the weather. For that sight was something never seen before and never to be seen again, and we dallied for a long time in this somewhat uncomfortable position in order to get a glimpse through the shreds and slashes in the rolling cloud-bales—a glimpse of a tiny scrap of sunlit earth, a slim strip of the lakeside and a streak of water.

By eight o'clock in the evening we were back outside the inn door again and restored ourselves with baked fish and eggs and wine galore.

And with the creeping on of dusk and gathering darkness, distant dreamy sounds rang in our ears: the tinkling of bells from the chapel, the splashing of the fountain, the stirring of little breezes, and in the distance bugles blowing—hushed and balmy moments lulling everything into stillness.

At half-past six on the morning of the 19th we set off uphill, then down to the Lake of Lucerne, to Fitznau. From there we went by water to Gersau. Lunch at the inn by the

\* Cold Bath

lakeside. About two o'clock facing the Grütli, where the three swore to Tell, and then on the ledge where the hero leaped ashore and where he is honoured by a painting that perpetuates the legend of his life and deeds. Three o'clock in Fluelen, where he was taken on board the ship, and about four in Altdorf, where he shot the apple off his son's head.

This poetical thread makes a good guide through the maze of these rock-walls, which reach down into the water, sheer and without any message for us. Immovable, they stand as calmly there as the scenery on a stage; good fortune or bad, joy or grief, affects only the actors listed in the programme for the day.

Reflections of this kind, however, were entirely outside those young men's scope. They had put all thought of the recent past out of their minds, and the future lay before them as wonderfully unexplored as the mountains into which they were still climbing.

On the 20th we set out for Amsteg, where some very tasty baked fish were set before us. Here now, in the wild setting of the foothills, where the Reuss gushed out from between savage cliffs and the chill glacial water lapped the clean gravel banks, I could not resist the chance to refresh myself in the rippling waves.

At three o'clock we went on further. There was a train of baggage-horses walking ahead of us, and together with them we strode across a broad plain of snow, only learning later that it was hollow underneath. Here the winter snow had drifted fast in a ravine, round which a *détour* usually had to be made, and this now served as a straight short-cut. The waters roaring along underneath had gradually hollowed it out and the mild summer air had melted more of the vault away, until now it was only a broad-arched bridge forming a natural link between this side and that. To see this freak of nature with our own eyes we ventured down into the ravine somewhat further up, where it was wider.

As we climbed on we could look back at pine woods below

us in the chasm through which the foaming Reuss could now and then be glimpsed, cascading over rock precipices.

At half-past seven we reached Wasen, where we refreshed ourselves with the heavy, sour red wine of Lombardy, first watering it down and then adding a great deal of sugar to make up for what nature had failed to generate in the grape. The innkeeper showed us some beautiful crystals. But at that time I was so far from taking an interest in natural history that I would not load myself with these mountain products even for the slight price asked

On the 21st, at half-past six, upwards again. The rock-face was becoming steadily more huge and terrible; and the track to the Teufelstein\*, up to the view of the Devil's Bridge, became steadily more strenuous. My companion chose this place for a rest, and he encouraged me to sketch the wonderful view. The general outlines came out quite well, but I could not get any depth or significance into it; I had no language for this sort of subject. We struggled on; and the enormous wildness of the scene seemed to increase with every step, smooth slopes giving way to mountain ranges and valleys turning into chasms. So my guide took me to the Urserner Loch,† through which I passed in a somewhat sulky mood. What we had seen so far was, after all, sublime; but this gloom blotted out previous impressions.

But it turned out that my mischievous guide had been looking forward to the joyful amazement that would inevitably overwhelm me on coming out of this place. Here the quietly foaming river meandered gently through a wide valley, which, although it was surrounded by mountains, was broad enough to invite human habitation. Over the neat little township of Urseren with its church, facing us on the level ground, there rose a small pine wood, held sacred because it protected those who dwelt below it from the avalanches rolling down from higher up. The green meadows of the valley, where they touched the river, were made lovelier still with stumpy willow

\* Devil's Crag.

† Glen of Urseren.

trees; the sight of vegetation gladdened the eye again after long absence. It was all very soothing and a great relief; returning to level paths one felt one's strength reviving, and my travelling companion was highly pleased with himself for the surprise that he had so cunningly prepared for me.

The mountain pastures produce the renowned Ursern cheese, and the ecstatic young men did justice to a very tolerable wine, intensifying their delight and indulging in still more enthusiastic flights of fancy.

At half-past three on the 22nd we set out from our inn, leaving the smooth vale of Urseren for the stony Livin district. Here again we instantly lost sight of all natural fertility. Naked or moss-grown rocks, covered with snow, gusts of stormy wind, clouds piling up and drifting past, the roar of waterfalls, the tinkling of baggage-horses' bells in the desolate heights, where one could not see them either approaching or receding into the distance. Here it did not need much effort of the imagination to envisage dragons' lairs in the chasms. But we felt both cheered and exalted by one of the loveliest and most picturesque waterfalls, grandly varied in all its cascading and now overbrimming with the summer's melted snow; now veiled by clouds, now laid bare to our eyes, it kept us spellbound there for a long while.

At last we came to little lakes, mist-lakes, as I should like to call them, because they could hardly be distinguished from floating shreds of cloud. Before long a building loomed up through the haze; this was the hospice, and we were well content to be able to take shelter under its hospitable roof.

\* \* \* \*

Heralded by the high-pitched barking of a little dog that rushed out to meet us, we were given a friendly welcome at the door by an elderly but still vigorous woman. She made excuses for the "padre," who had gone to Milan but was expected back that evening; and then, without wasting words, she devoted herself to our needs and comfort. We were shown into a large, warm room; bread, cheese and a drinkable wine were set before us, with promises of a plentiful supper. Now

we talked over the surprises of the day, and my friend was highly pleased with himself because everything had gone off so well and we had a day behind us full of impressions not to be recaptured either in poetry or in prose.

Twilight had almost quite given way to darkness when at last the stately padre came in, welcomed his guests with a pleasantly familiar dignity, and impressed it on the cook that she was to do her best for us. When we could not refrain from expressing our astonishment that he should have chosen to spend his life up here in such an utter desert, far from all society, he assured us that he had no lack of society, just as we among others had come to give him the pleasure of our visit. There was very considerable trade between Italy and Germany and this constant interchange kept him in touch with leading commercial houses. He often went down to Milan, he said, and less frequently to Lucerne; but it was from there that the merchants who took charge of the post along this highway often sent up young men who were meant to get to know all about the workings of this transport up here at this important point.

The evening passed in various conversation of this kind, and we slept peacefully in rather short bunks fixed to the wall, more like bookshelves than beds.

Having risen early, I was soon outside in the open air, only to find myself in a narrow place shut in by lofty mountain peaks. I sat down on the footpath leading down to Italy and began to sketch, as amateurs always do, precisely the things that could not be drawn and refused to make a picture: the nearest peaks, their sides streaked with white furrows of snow and black ridges between. However, this futile effort did at least imprint the picture on my memory for ever.

My companion came briskly up to me and began: "What do you say to our clerical host's story of last night? Don't you feel yourself drawn, as I do, down from this dragon's peak into those enchanting realms below? The walk down through these ravines must be magnificent, and no effort at

all And then when it opens out by Bellinzona, what joy it must be! The priest's description reminded me vividly of the islands in the great lake Since Keyssler's travels so much has been heard and seen of it that I can't resist the temptation."

"Don't you feel the same?" he went on. "You're sitting in just the right spot I stood here once before and had not the courage to leap down. Go ahead, think no more of it, and wait for me in Airolo I shall follow with the courier when I have said goodbye to his reverence and settled everything."

"I don't altogether care for setting about such a thing on the spur of the moment," I answered.

"Come, what is there to hesitate about?" he exclaimed. "We have money enough to get to Milan, and we can get credit there. I have more than one acquaintance among the merchants, from meeting them at the Fair "

He urged me still more pressingly

"Go along," I said, "get everything ready for us to leave, and then we shall see."

It seems to me as though human beings felt no power of decision at such moments and were more inclined to be ruled by earlier impressions. Lombardy and Italy lay before me, a strange land; behind me lay Germany, my dear, familiar home, full of pleasant domestic prospects. And, let me confess, what had so long kept me in bondage, what was the centre of my existence, was even now the one indispensable element, with frontiers that I did not dare to cross. A little gold heart that she had given me in my happiest hours still hung from the same ribbon on which she had tied it round my neck, where it hung warmed by my love. I took hold of it and kissed it. And here I should like to interpolate a poem written on that occasion.

Round my neck, suspended, as a token  
Of those joys that swiftly passed away,  
Art thou here that thou mayst lengthen love's short day,

Still binding when the bond of souls is broken?  
Lili, from thee I fly; yet I am doomed to feel  
Thy fetters still,  
Though to strange vales and mountains I depart.  
Yes, Lili's heart must yet remain  
Attached to my fond heart.  
Thus the bird, snapping his string in twain,  
Seeks his wood, his own,  
Still a mark of bondage bearing,  
Of that string a fragment wearing  
• The old—the free-born bird—he cannot be again,  
When once a master he has known.

I scrambled to my feet, to get away from this rocky place as fast as I could, to make sure that my friend, now charging along together with the servant carrying the luggage, should not sweep me off down into the abyss with him. I too said goodbye to the reverend father and without another word set off down the path we had come along. Rather hesitatingly, my friend followed; in spite of his friendship and affection for me, he walked some distance behind me for a while, until finally that glorious waterfall brought us together again and kept us together and it was finally agreed, too, to let what had been decided on pass as the right and pleasant thing.

There is nothing more to be said about our descent except that we found that snow-bridge, which we had calmly gone across a few days earlier in the company of the heavily-laden horses, had collapsed completely; and as we had to make a *détour* through the ravine, now opened up, we gazed in astonished admiration at the colossal ruins of that natural architecture.

My friend could not completely reconcile himself to having to postpone his trip into Italy. He had probably thought it out earlier, hoping to take me by surprise on the spot, a friendly wile. As a result, our return could not very well go off cheerfully; but making my way down in silence I was all the more intensively preoccupied with trying to hold fast at least the most distinguishing characteristic details of the vast

scenes which would otherwise tend to dwindle in the memory.

Not without new and renewed sensations and thoughts, between the high cliffs of the Lake of Lucerne, we made our way to Kussnacht, landing there and continuing our journey, pausing to pay homage to the Tell chapel on the road and honour the memory of that assassination which the whole world regards as heroic, patriotic and glorious. Then we crossed the Lake of Zug, which we had already glimpsed in the distance from the heights of the Rigi. In Zug itself I remember only some stained glass panes in the windows in our hotel room; they were not large but very well done of their kind. Then our journey went on across the Albis into the Sihl valley, where we visited a young Hanoverian, von Lindau, who was leading something of a hermit existence here, and tried to pacify him for the annoyance he had felt some time earlier in Zurich, when he had offered to be my companion and I had refused in a not very friendly or tactful way. The excellent Passavant's jealous friendship was the real reason for refusing: delightful though his company would have been, it would also have been inconvenient.

But before we descend again from these glorious heights to the lake and the town nestling there below, I must make one more observation on my attempts to preserve some memento of the scenery in sketches and drawings. The habit I had had since childhood of looking at every landscape as though it were a picture, lured me, whenever I became aware of the pictorial aspect of scenery before me, into trying to give it permanence and so to keep a lasting souvenir of such moments. While at other times I tried my hand only with easy subjects, in such a world as this I very soon began to feel my amateurishness.

My own eagerness, as well as the hurry I was in, made me resort to a curious method of my own. As soon as I had grasped an interesting scene imaginatively and got its broad outlines on to paper, sketching them in with a few strokes, I added the details in writing at the side of the picture; and by putting down in words what I could not manage with my



pencil I transformed such views as these into mental scenery so vivid that later on, whenever I happened to want them for a poem or a story, they were instantly to hand, floating before my inner eye.

\*                    \*                    \*

*[On his return he continued to see Lili, though the relationship was now under considerable strain.]*

PARTING WITH LILI, DEPARTURE  
FOR WEIMAR

THERE were moments when everything seemed to be just as it had been in the old days; but they vanished again like phantoms, like summer lightning.

Well-meaning people had told me in confidence that, when Lili had listened to a description of all the difficulties in the way of our marriage, she had said she was ready to give up her surroundings and present way of life, out of love for me, and go to America with me. At that time, perhaps even more than now, America was the Eldorado of everyone frustrated by the circumstances of his or her life.

But the very thing that should have sent my hopes soaring only depressed me. After all, my dear home, my father's beautiful house, only a few hundred paces from hers, was a safer, more desirable environment than the remote and unknown country overseas. But I cannot deny that when I was with her all my hopes and desires sprang to life again, and I was agitated by fresh uncertainties.

My sister's advice, however, was extremely definite and discouraging. With all the understanding and good sense she could muster, she not only summed up the situation clearly, but wrote letter after letter, almost unbearably intense, harping always more urgently on the one theme. "Very well," she said, "if the two of you cannot avoid it, then you must endure it. This is the sort of thing one must resign oneself to, but not *choose*." Some months passed in this most utterly wretched of all states of mind. Everything and everybody was against this marriage. Only in Lili herself, I believed—indeed, I knew—there was a strength that could have overcome all difficulties.

Being so conscious of the state they were in, both the lovers avoided meeting alone; but convention made it impossible for

them not to meet in society. That was the worst ordeal I ever had to go through, as every finely sensitive person will agree, when I explain in more detail.

We may admit the generalisation that when a new acquaintance, a newly budding love, begins, a lover prefers to draw a veil over the past. Love does not concern itself with antecedents; and springing up in miraculous fashion, quick as a lightning-flash, why should it care about either past or future? Actually, however, my closer intimacy with Lili began when she told me the story of her early life and how from her childhood she had aroused love and devotion in many people, especially in strangers visiting that sociable house, and had revelled in it, although no permanent relationship ever followed.

True lovers look on all that they ever felt before only as a preparation for their present happiness, only as a foundation on which the mansion of their destiny will arise. Former loves are then like ghosts that glide away before the breaking of the day.

But what happened? The time of the fair came, and with it the throng of ghosts, now flesh and blood. All this important family's business friends began to arrive in the house, and it soon became quite clear that none of them either could or would quite give up a certain interest in Frau Schönemann's charming daughter. Without actually being familiar, the younger men did behave like close friends; and those in the middle years observed a certain affectionate formality, like men who while making themselves agreeable would also like to assert greater claims. Some of them were handsome men, with the easy manners of those accustomed to wealth and security.

But it was the elderly gentlemen who were quite insufferable with their avuncular way of going on: they could not keep their hands to themselves and were always petting her in the most revolting manner, even asking for a kiss, a favour which was granted, on the cheek. She was so used to conforming to all this kind of thing. But the conversation also

evoked many a dubious memory. There was talk about boating-trips and picnics, all sorts of adventures that had turned out happily in the end, and balls and evening strolls, mockery of ridiculous suitors, and much else of the same kind that was bound to arouse jealous fury in the desolate lover's heart, after he had for a time had sole possession of her who had evolved from all those past experiences. But even in this crowd, in all this bustle, she did not neglect her lover; and when she turned to him she had a way of always finding the simplest and yet most affectionate way of saying whatever was in keeping with their situation at the moment.

[*Goethe was now working on his second great play, "Egmont."*]

In the course of this biographical record it has been seen in the greatest detail how as a child, as a growing boy, and as a young man the writer went his various ways in quest of the supernatural: first drawn by the attractions of a natural religion and then bound in devotion to a positive one; next probing his own powers by meditation and concentration, and ultimately giving himself up joyfully to the recognised faith. When he was roving about in the interspaces between these realms, exploring and observing, he met with more than one experience that did not seem to belong to any of them, and came more and more to see that it is wiser to avert one's thoughts from all that is monstrous and incomprehensible.

It seemed to him that in nature organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate, he discovered something that manifested itself only in contradictions and therefore could not be summed up in one idea, much less in one word. It was not divine, for it seemed to be irrational; not human, for it was without intelligence; not diabolical, for it was benevolent; not angelic, for it often betrayed malice. It resembled chance in that it had no causality; it had affinities with providence, too, for it showed hints of interrelations. All that limits us seemed to be vulnerable to it, whatever it was; it seemed to toy wantonly with the essential elements of our

existence; it could make time contract and it could make space expand. It seemed to be really at home only in the realm of impossibilities, contemptuously rejecting the merely possible.

This principle, which seemed to permeate all forms of life, separating them or linking them together, I called *the daemonic*, following the example of the ancients and all those who had recognised something of the same kind. I did my best to escape from this appalling entity by seeking refuge, as my habit was, in an image.

One of the things that interested me most in history was the period of the Netherlands' struggle for independence and unity. I had done exhaustive research into the sources and tried to get as much first-hand information as possible and to imagine it all vividly. It seemed to me that the situations were highly dramatic; and I was struck by one central figure around whom the others seemed to revolve like planets—Count Egmont, whose chivalrous, noble spirit and humanity appealed to me most of all.

But for my purpose I had to transform him into a character with the kind of qualities that suit a young man better than one in the prime of life, an unmarried man better than the father of a family, and an independent man better than one who, however free his mind may be, has his actions limited by all sorts of responsibilities.

Then, when in my own imagination I had rejuvenated him and liberated him from all obligations, I endowed him with immeasurable joy in living, boundless self-confidence, the gift (*attrattiva*) of fascinating everyone with whom he came into contact and so winning popularity with the common people, a princess's unspoken regard and a simple girl's frankly declared love, as well as the friendship of a wise statesman and even, too, of the son of his greatest enemy.

The personal courage that distinguishes the hero is the basis of his whole character, the very soil from which it grows and flourishes. He has no sense of danger and shuts his eyes to the greatest danger of all even when it has almost overtaken

him. Somehow we fight our way through the ranks of besieging enemies; but the snares and wiles of politics are harder to break through. The daemonic principle, which is at work in both realms, the conflict in which all that is lovable is doomed and what is hateful triumphs, and furthermore the prospect that from this a third element may emerge, something that will fulfil the longings of all mankind—this, I think, is what made the drama popular: not immediately, it is true, but later on, at the right time, and down to this day. And for this reason, for the sake of many of my dear readers, I should like to anticipate my own story at this point; and, not knowing when I shall have another such opportunity; I shall speak of something that I came to realise only much later.

Although the daemonic principle can manifest itself in all things physical and non-physical, and indeed occurs very interestingly in animals, it is mainly—and most strangely—connected with man, a force that, if it is not actually antagonistic to the moral scheme of things, does at least run counter to it, so that one might say the one is the warp and the other the woof.

There are countless names for the phenomena that result. All philosophies and religions have tried to solve this riddle, in prose and in poetry, and so to get rid of it once and for all—and good luck to them for the future too!

But this daemonic principle is most terrible when it becomes the ruling factor in a man. During the course of my life I have had the opportunity of observing several such cases, either from close at hand or from a distance. Such people are not always outstanding either for intellect or ability and seldom of sympathetic character; but there is a tremendous dynamic force radiating from them and they have incredible power over all creatures, men and animals, indeed even over the elements—and who can say how far such an influence may extend? Even a union of all moral forces is helpless in the encounter with them; it is in vain that the enlightened section of mankind accuses them of being

deceived, or else deceivers, for the masses are hypnotically drawn to them. Seldom or never is more than one of them alive at the same time, and they cannot be defeated except by the Universe itself, with which they have gone to war. It may be from observations of this kind that that queer but tremendous dictum arose: *Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse*.

And now from these loftier considerations I turn back to my own small life, in which, however, strange events were about to take place, wearing at least the guise of a daemonic principle. From high on the St. Gotthard Pass, turning my back on Italy, I had gone home because I could not do without Lili. A love founded on the hope of a permanent union does not die in a moment. Indeed, it feeds on the contemplation of the justifiable desires and righteous hopes that one cherishes.

It is in the nature of the thing that in such cases the girl finds it easier to make the best of the situation than does the young man. Being descendants of Pandora, the fair sex is endowed with the desirable gift of casting spells and weaving lures and gathering admirers round them, only half intentionally and because it is their nature, rather than because they wish to indulge in wanton play with others' happiness; and in so doing they often run into danger, as the sorcerers' apprentice did, and are appalled at the multitude of their admirers. And then ultimately, after all, a choice must be made and *one* must be exclusively preferred to all the others, *one* must lead the bride home.

And what random things decide where the choice shall fall! I had determined to renounce Lili, but love made me suspicious of my own determination. Lili had said goodbye to me in the same spirit, and I had set out on the splendid journey that was to distract my thoughts; but its effect was the very opposite.

So long as I was away I believed in our temporary separation and not in the final parting. All memories, hopes and desires had free play. Then I returned home; and if it is heaven for free and happy lovers to meet again, for two people

who are separated only for reasons of prudence a reunion is an intolerable purgatory, one of the forecourts of hell. When I came back to Lili's vicinity, I felt redoubled misery from all the discords that had disturbed our relationship before; and when again I saw her face to face, it wrung my heart to think that she was lost to me.

So I decided to take flight yet once again. And nothing could have happened more opportunely than that the young Duke and Duchess of Weimar should have come to Frankfurt from Karlsruhe and that I was once more\* invited to follow them to Weimar. These my exalted patrons had always shown me unvarying gracious and even familiar kindness, to which I, for my part, responded with passionate gratitude. The devotion I had felt for the duke from the very first moment, my feelings of homage for the princess, whom I had already known so long, although only by sight, my wish to pay my respects in person to Wieland,† who had been so generous to me, and to make up on the spot for my half deliberate, half unconscious bad manners—here were motives enough to stimulate even a young man not suffering from an unhappy passion, and set him moving. But in addition to all this was the fact that somehow or other I had to flee from Lili, whether into the South, which my father's daily talk had conjured up in my imagination as the most glorious paradise of nature and the arts; or to the North, where I was invited by such a very important circle of distinguished people.

The young princely couple now arrived in Frankfurt on their return journey. The Duke of Meiningen's suite was also there at the same time, and I was very kindly received by them and also by the young prince's companion, Geheimrat (Privy Councillor) von Dürkheim. But, as was the way of things with me in my youth, it seemed some curious mishap

\* This was a second invitation.

† The writer, C. M. Wieland (1733-1813), had been the Duke's tutor and was now living in retirement at his court. Goethe had been guilty of a 'jeu d'esprit' at his expense, which Lenz had persuaded him to print, and which Wieland had forgiven him.



must occur; and a misunderstanding put me in an incredibly although quite amusingly awkward position.

Both the dukes, of Weimar and of Meiningen, were lodging at the same inn. I was sent an invitation to dine there. I was so preoccupied with the thought of the court of Weimar that it did not occur to me to make further enquiries, all the more as I was not sufficiently conceited to imagine that the Duke of Meiningen should also wish to take some notice of me. So, dressed in my best, I went along to the Sign of the Roman Emperor, found the Weimar apartment empty and then, hearing that the duke and his suite were with the Duke of Meiningen, went along there and was graciously welcomed. I thought this was probably a visit before dining or that all might be dining together, and waited for something to happen. But suddenly all the Weimar suite moved off, and I of course followed. However, they did not go back to their rooms, but straight down the stairs and out to the carriages. And I was left standing in the street, alone.

And now, instead of finding a judicious and tactful way of looking into the matter and trying to discover an explanation, in my usual resolute fashion I immediately marched off home, where I found my parents sitting over dessert. My father shook his head, while my mother did her best to console me. That evening she told me privately that when I went out, my father had said he was really amazed that I, who was in general anything but a simpleton, should fail to see that I was merely being made a dupe of and led by the nose. But I refused to be upset by this, for I had already met Herr von Dürkheim, who had stopped me and in his urbane fashion uttered some mildly joking reproaches. At that point I had awakened from my dream and had the opportunity of expressing my thanks as gracefully as I could for the favour that had been intended for me, all unhopd for and unexpected, and to plead for forgiveness.

Now, after I had for my own good reasons accepted these kind offers, the following arrangement was made. A gentleman of the court who had remained behind in Karlsruhe,

waiting for a landau built in Strasbourg, would arrive in Frankfurt on a certain day; I was to be ready to set out for Weimar with him immediately. The cheerful and gracious leave that the young duke and duchess took of me, together with their courtiers' pleasantness to me, made me extremely desirous of making this journey, for which the road seemed to be so agreeably smoothed out.

But here again an apparently quite simple situation was complicated by various little accidents, and confused and almost completely ruined by over-impulsiveness. For after I had told everybody which day I was leaving and had said goodbye to them all, and had packed in a hurry, not forgetting my manuscripts, I began to look forward to the hour when my companion would drive up in the new carriage and carry me off into a completely new environment. The hour went by, and so did the day. As I did not want to say goodbye to everyone all over again, and in any case wanted to avoid being overwhelmed by inquisitive visitors, I had from that morning on let it be understood that I was not at home; and so I had to keep to the house, even to my own room, and lie low, which was a weird situation to be in.

But solitude and confinement had always had a way of doing me good, because I felt an urge to make the best of such periods; and so I went on writing away at *Egmont* and almost finished it. I read it aloud to my father, who took a quite special fancy to this play and wanted more than anything to see it finished and in print, as he hoped that it would serve to increase his son's reputation. Indeed, I must say that he was badly in need of some such relief and some fresh cause for satisfaction, for he took an extremely unhappy view of the failure of the carriage to appear. Now he regarded the whole thing as a mere fabrication, refused to believe that there was any new landau at all, and took the tardy cavalier for a mirage. All this, admittedly, he only let me know indirectly, but he tormented himself and my mother with these ideas all the more, declaring that the whole thing was a princely hoax got up as a consequence of my lubberly be-

haviour, to make me feel small and put me in my place, by leaving me disgracefully in the lurch just when I had been looking forward to such an honour.

I myself remained quite confident for a while, glad of the time I had gained, undisturbed by either friends or strangers or any other social distractions, and stoutly went on writing my *Egmont*, although not altogether without some inner turmoil. And indeed the state of mind I was in may have turned out to the advantage of the play, which has so many passions storming through it that it could hardly have been written by someone in a quite unperturbed state of mind.

So a week passed. And the days continued to pass, and this almost solitary confinement was beginning to affect my nerves. Having for years been used to spending a great deal of time in the open air and in the company of friends, with whom I had a frank and intense exchange of thoughts and feelings, or together with a beloved girl—whom I had, indeed, resolved to part from, but who still exercised a violent fascination over me, drawing me towards her so long as there was a chance of seeing her—all this began to make me so overwrought that there was a danger of my losing interest in my tragedy and having my creative energy as a poet quite counter-balanced by impatience. There had already been several evenings when I had not been able to stand it any longer indoors. Wrapped up in a big cloak I slipped stealthily about the town, past my friends' and acquaintances' houses, and did not fail to go up to Lili's window, too. Her rooms were on the ground floor of a corner house; and although the green blinds were down, I could quite well make out that the candles stood where they always did. Soon I heard her singing at the piano. It was the song "Ah! why resistless dost thou press me?" that had been written for her just under a year ago. I could not help feeling that she sang with more expression than ever before. I could hear every word, for I had my ear pressed as close to the window as the bars, which curved outward, would permit. After she had stopped singing, I could see by a shadow crossing the blinds that she had

stood up and was walking up and down, but it was in vain that I tried to get a glimpse of her lovely form through the close-woven stuff of the blinds. Only the firm resolution to go away and not inflict my presence on her, to renounce her once and for all, and the thought of what a strange and startling effect my reappearance would have, enabled me to tear myself away from where I stood, so near to her whom I loved.

A few more days passed, and my father's theory began to seem more and more probable, since not even a letter came from Karlsruhe to account for the delay of the carriage. My creative work came to a standstill; and now, being eaten up by mental uneasiness, I was fair game for my father's suggestions. He put it to me as follows: there was nothing to be done about the situation now anyway, and my trunk was packed; he would give me money and credit for a trip to Italy; but I must make up my mind quickly and leave at once. The problem was a serious one for me, and I was both hesitant and doubtful. At last I agreed that if neither the carriage nor a message had come by a certain time, I would start on my journey, making first for Heidelberg and then from there not through Switzerland this time, but crossing the Alps by way of the Grisons or the Tyrol.

Naturally, rather odd things do come about when an unmethodical young man, always ready to go off on a wild-geese-chase himself, is driven further off his course by the excitable errors of someone older. But that is what makes youth and life what they are: we generally come to understand the strategy only after the campaign is over. In the ordinary course of commercial business such an incident would have been easy enough to clear up; but we rather enjoy entering into a conspiracy with error against truth and reality, just as we shuffle the cards before we deal them, in order not to prevent chance from having a part in the game. And that is how the element comes into existence in which and on which the daemonic principle loves to act, playing us all the worse tricks the more we have a foreboding sense of its hovering nearness.

The last day had drawn to its close and I was to start out on my travels the next morning. And now I felt an overwhelming urge to see my friend Passavant, who had just returned from Switzerland, once again, because he would really have had good reason to be angry with me if I had offended against our mutual trust by making a complete secret of what I meant to do. I therefore sent him a message by a stranger, asking him to meet me at a certain place that night. Wrapped in my cloak, I was the first there; and then after a while he came along, a good deal astonished by the message he had received and still more astonished to see who it was who wanted to meet him. His delight was as great as his astonishment, and there could be no thought of advice and persuasion. He wished me luck on my journey into Italy, we parted, and it was still early the next day when I found myself bowling along the Bergstrasse.

There were a number of reasons for going to Heidelberg. One was rational, for I had heard that my prospective companion to Weimar would come from Karlsruhe via Heidelberg; and the moment I arrived I left a note at the post, to be given to a gentleman travelling through, whom I described. The second reason was emotional and was connected with my former relationship to Lili. The fact was that Demoiselle Delf, who had been in our confidence as to our love and had even acted as an intermediary with our parents, lived there; and I thought it would be the greatest of happiness, before leaving Germany, to be able to gossip about those happy times with a patient, tolerant old friend.

I was welcomed very kindly and introduced to many families among whom I soon felt thoroughly at home, as for instance in the house of Oberforstmeister\* von W. The parents were very civil, unaffected people, and one of the daughters was rather like Friederike. It was just the time of the vintage, the weather was fine, and all the feelings I had known in Alsace revived here in this fair valley of the Rhine and the Neckar. Recently I had experienced strange things,

\* Forestry Superintendent.

in myself and in others, but it was all still in a state of chaos, my life had not yet acquired any real shape, and the infinity of which I had become aware only bewildered me. But in company I was just as I had always been, perhaps even rather pleasanter and more amusing. Here under this open sky, among these free and easy people, I tried playing the old games that always remain new and sparkling when one is young. With an earlier love still in my heart, its embers still glowing, I aroused interest, quite without my wish and even though I kept silent about it; and so here too I was soon at home, even an indispensable member of every party, and forgot that I had meant to continue my journey after a couple of evenings spent in gossiping.

Demoiselle Delf was one of those people who, without actually being given to intrigue, are always busy with something, keeping others busy too, and always have some little job or other in hand. She had become a staunch friend of mine and found it all the easier to tempt me into lingering on here, as I was staying in her house, where she could spread all sorts of pleasures before me and put all sorts of obstacles in the way of my leaving. When I tried to turn the conversation to the subject of Lili, she was not as indulgent and sympathetic as I had hoped. On the contrary, she praised our joint decision to end the engagement under the circumstances, and declared we must resign ourselves to the inevitable, do our best to forget something which had been impossible, and look round for a new interest in life. Being of an organising turn of mind, she did not want to leave this to chance; and so she had already sketched out a plan for my future course of action, from which I could see that her last invitation to Heidelberg had not been as casual as it had seemed.

The fact of the matter was that the Prince-Elector Karl Theodor, who had done so much for the arts and sciences, still had his residence in Mannheim; and precisely because the court was Catholic, while the district itself was Protestant, the latter party had every reason to reinforce their ranks with vigorous and promising men. Now I was off, God willing, to

Italy, there to extend my knowledge and understanding of the arts; and meanwhile my friends would do their best for me and by the time I returned it would become clear whether Fraulein von W's feeling for me had developed into love or faded out, and whether it would be advisable for me to marry into a respected family and try to find happiness by setting up a home in a new fatherland.

Although I did not actually turn down these suggestions, my chaotic temperament could not quite attune itself to my friend's taste for organisation; I preferred to enjoy the amenity of the present moment, with the image of Lili floating before my eyes, waking or dreaming, mingling with everything that appealed to me or kept me amused. However, I did summon up the thoughts of my great plan of travel in good earnest and decided to find some gentle, well-bred manner of disengaging myself and going on my way in a few days.

Demoiselle Delf had been expounding her plans to me till late that night, with all the details of what others were prepared to do for me, and I could not do otherwise than honour these people's intentions with all gratitude, although I could not quite overlook the fact that some of them hoped to use me and the favour I would possibly be in to strengthen their own position at court. We went on talking until nearly one o'clock. I had been sound asleep, though not very long, when I was aroused by a post-horn, and a horseman stopped outside the house. A short while later Demoiselle Delf appeared with a candle in one hand and a letter in the other and came over to my bed.

"Here we have it!" she exclaimed. "Read it! Tell me what it is about. It is bound to be from Weimar. If it is an invitation, think of our talk and don't accept it."

I asked her to give me the candle and leave me alone for a quarter of an hour. She left me reluctantly. I sat looking straight ahead of me for a while, without opening the letter. The despatch came from Frankfurt; I recognised both the seal and the handwriting and realised that my friend had arrived to fetch me. Doubt and uncertainty had driven us to make

a leap in the dark. Why should I not have waited in peaceful and comfortable surroundings for a man whose arrival could be definitely expected and whose journey might be delayed by any of so many chance events? The scales fell from my eyes. Suddenly I remembered all that past goodness, graciousness and kindly interest and was almost ashamed of my eccentric aberration. Then I opened the letter and found everything quite naturally explained. My missing travelling companion had been waiting for the new carriage to come from Strasbourg day by day and hour by hour, just as we had been waiting for him; finally he had gone to Frankfurt by way of Mannheim, on business, and been aghast not to find me there. He had sent off this hasty message by the post, on the assumption that now the misunderstanding was cleared up I would instantly return and not embarrass him by forcing him to arrive in Weimar without me.

Much as both reason and emotion inclined me to this point of view, my new scheme of action was also not entirely without weighty counter-attractions. My father had drawn up a very excellent itinerary and given me a number of books to read on the journey so that I could better appreciate what I was to see. In hours of leisure, up till now, I had had no other source of amusement and had indeed, during my last brief journey in the coach, thought of nothing else. All those magnificent scenes that I had learnt to know from all sorts of anecdotes and pictures ever since my childhood now formed a visionary panorama before my inner eye, and I could think of nothing more desirable than to travel towards them, at the same time drawing definitely further away from Lili.

Meanwhile, I had got dressed and was now walking up and down the room. My anxious hostess came in.

"What hopes may I have?" she exclaimed.

"My dear lady," I said, "don't try to persuade me, I am determined to go back. I have weighed up the reasons in my own mind and there would be no point in repeating them. The decision had to be made sooner or later, and who is better able to make it than the person ultimately concerned?"



I was in a turmoil, and so was she. There was an emotional scene, which I finally put an end to by telling my servant to order post-horses. It was in vain that I begged my hostess to calm down and make a real goodbye of the joking one I had said to the company the night before; in vain that I asked her to remember that this was only to be a visit, a short stay, and that my journey to Italy was not finally abandoned nor had it become impossible for me ever to come back here. She would not listen to anything of what I said and drove me, excited as I already was, into a perfect frenzy. The carriage was at the door; the luggage was stowed in; the postillion's horn rang out with the usual impatient reminder; and I tore myself away. She did not want to let me go and produced all the arguments all over again, so adroitly that at last I burst out into ecstatic ranting of Egmont's words:

"Friend, friend, no more! As though lashed onward by invisible phantoms, time's horses of the sun career with our destiny's light chariot, and there is nothing we can do but hold the reins unflinchingly and firmly, steering the wheels now right, now left, swerving here from a boulder, there from a precipice. Who knows whither he is driving? Scarcely does he remember whence he came!"

